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Security Council

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Official communiqué of the 7794th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 26 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"At its 7794th meeting, held in private on 26 October 2016, the Security Council considered the item entitled 'Briefing by the President of the International Court of Justice'.

"The President of the Security Council invited Judge Ronny Abraham, President of the International Court of Justice, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The members of the Council heard a briefing by Judge Abraham.

"The members of the Council and Judge Abraham had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.7795

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7795th meeting
Wednesday, 26 October 2016, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramirez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/873)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. *Corrections* should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

16-34324 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015) (S/2016/873)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/873, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015).

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: Let me take Council members to East Aleppo this afternoon. In a deep basement, huddled with our children and elderly parents, the stench of urine and the vomit caused by unrelieved fear never leaving our nostrils, waiting for the bunker-busting bomb we know may kill us in this, the only sanctuary left to us, just like the one that took out our neighbours and their house last night; or scrabbling with our bare hands in the street above to reach under concrete rubble, lethal steel reinforcing bars jutting out at us as we hysterically try to reach our young child screaming unseen in the dust and dirt below our feet, choking to catch our breath in the toxic dust and the smell of gas ever ready to ignite and explode over us.

These are people just like us — not sitting around a table in New York but forced into desperate, pitiless suffering, their future wiped out. These are constant, harrowing reports and images of people detained, tortured, forcibly displaced, maimed and executed. Bombings take place in plain sight, night and day, day in and day out. Hospitals are destroyed, doctors killed, schools destroyed and children denied education, water stations destroyed, families cowering in basements. Peoples' lives are destroyed and Syria itself is destroyed. And it is under our collective watch.

And it need not be like this; this is not inevitable. It is not an accident; it is the deliberate actions of one set of powerful human beings on another set of impotent, innocent human beings. Never has the phrase of poet Robert Burns, "man's inhumanity to man", been as apt. It can be stopped, but the Security Council has to choose to make it stop. And I would ask members to remember that the world is not going to think the worse of them for loss of face or power politics. Global leadership is about doing the right thing to stop the draining of the blood of Syrians. Syria is now a country that will soon no longer resemble even the most basic definition of a country. We should all remember that Syria was one of the first signatories of the Charter of the United Nations — "We the peoples".

As the Secretary-General pointed out last week, the Aleppo offensive by Syrian and Russian military forces has been the most sustained and intensive aerial bombardment campaign witnessed since the beginning of the conflict more than half a decade ago. The results in human terms have been horrific. Aleppo has essentially become a kill zone. Since my last briefing to the Council less than a month ago (see S/PV.7780), 400 more people have been killed and nearly 2,000 injured in eastern Aleppo. So many of them — too many of them — were children. Last week, the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated that indiscriminate air strikes across the eastern parts of the city by Syrian and Russian forces caused the overwhelming majority of civilian casualties. He stressed that

"these violations constitute war crimes [and] if knowingly committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against civilians, they constitute crimes against humanity".

In amongst this apocalyptic horror in eastern Aleppo, there have been cruel glimmers of hope, but they are too quickly extinguished. Throughout last week, following the welcome announcement of a halt of all Russian and Syrian air strikes on Aleppo, the United Nations, together With the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Syrian non-governmental organizations, immediately

set up plans to urgently evacuate critically injured and sick people, as well as their family members, from eastern Aleppo to places of their choosing. Our brave, tireless humanitarian teams, led by the United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Aleppo itself, engaged in long and complex negotiations involving multiple rounds of clarifications on conditions and guarantees.

It is with intense frustration that I note that the evacuations were obstructed by various factors, including delays in receiving the list of patients to be medically evacuated from the very representatives and interlocutors of the people in eastern Aleppo, as well as the Government of Syria's objection to allowing medical and other relief supplies into the eastern side of the city.

Despite these delays, the United Nations was ready to launch our operations on Sunday, 23 October. However, objections by two non-State armed opposition — Ahrar al-Sham and Harakat Nour al-Din al-Zenki — scuppered these plans. The United Nations made every effort to get assurances from all parties, only for the parties to then fail to agree on each other's conditions about how evacuations should proceed. And then we could not prevail upon the Syrian and Russian authorities to extend their pause. Our teams stayed for another 24 hours and the bombs were dropping within 500 yards of the fighting line before, disappointed and frustrated, they managed to leave Aleppo, with two staff members of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and one from the World Health Organization bravely staying in Aleppo, where they remain today, to try salvage the talks.

And the result? Once again, humanitarian hopes have been smashed by parties who consistently fail to put civilian lives above political and military interests. For example, two children aged 9 and 14 — suffering from heart problems and intestinal disease, respectively — were to be evacuated for urgent medical treatment, but now remain trapped in eastern Aleppo city. These are neither soldiers nor sympathizers nor militants; they are children in urgent need of medical care, and we, the international community, have just failed to reach them. Goodness knows we have tried, but selfish, inhuman interests have trumped the moral and humanitarian imperative.

There will be complaints and accusations about who caused the failure of the medical evacuations, but it was those very complainers and those very accusers who put their own interests above that of the injured and sick, who refused to make reasonable compromises, and who refused to allow anything to be done unless it was their way. And their way was not possible. Yes, they will fingerpoint at the United Nations — the one party in all this that is not to blame — to attempt to divert the blame from the perpetrators and refusers and their hideous calumnies.

Humanitarian needs — the lives of children not even in their teens — cannot be used as political or military bargaining chips, and yet once again parties to this terrible conflict have sought to do exactly that. It is wrong for armed groups to hold to ransom the sick, injured and children of those they cynically claim to fight for. It was wrong for the air strikes to start again when the bombers knew we still had a chance to get the evacuees out.

Not only have the parties to the conflict not had the moral fortitude to allow medical evacuations; the Syrian and Russian forces from air and land could not even demonstrate a willingness to protect what meagre medical facilities still function inside eastern Aleppo. Relentless attacks on health workers and hospitals have left the handful of doctors still alive in eastern Aleppo unable to cope. In fact, fewer than 30 doctors remain in the east of the city, and only six partially functional hospitals are still in service. Only 11 ambulances are currently operative, rendering the collection of injured people from the scenes of attack ever more challenging. For many, it is impossible, so their fate is left unattended. Hospital beds are too few, and essential medicines — including anesthetics, intravenous fluids, vaccines and trauma supplies — are running out. Blankets are in such short supply that body bags are being used for warmth instead.

Let me be clear — eastern Aleppo is besieged by the Syrian Government. No United Nations assistance has entered in nearly four months. Food is so scarce that many people survive on one meal of rice a day, and what is available in local markets is sold at vastly inflated prices. At the same time, civilians are being bombed by Syrian and Russian forces, and if they survive that they will starve tomorrow. The tactics are as obvious as they are intolerable — make life intolerable; make death likely; push people from starvation to despair to surrender; push people to leave on green buses.

The leaflets that have been dropped on eastern Aleppo by Syrian and Russian aircraft operating in that area make the intention chillingly clear. They read: "This is your last hope... Save yourselves. If you do not leave these areas urgently you will be annihilated" And they end by saying: "You know that everyone has given up on you. They left you alone to face your doom and nobody will give you any help". And it is clear that the aircraft that drop the bombs, the generals who give the orders and the politicians who have designed the strategy intend to make good on that horrific promise.

We have seen this happen numerous times already — in Homs, Darayya, Moadamiya, Al-Waer and now in eastern Aleppo. It will be the fate of those hundreds of thousands of people still trapped in besieged locations all across the country. That is not a world we can accept. All parties and their sponsors must put an end to these medieval tactics. All parties and their sponsors must grant us safe humanitarian access — sustained and non-politicized humanitarian and medical access — to all in need throughout the country, to those in Aleppo and the hundreds of thousands of people trapped in the other 17 besieged locations around the country. Despite what those abhorrent leaflets say, we must demonstrate to the Syrian people that we have not given up on them, that they are not left alone to their doom and that they will not be annihilated.

In addition to the air offensive against eastern Aleppo, and despite a brief lull in fighting last week by Russian and Syrian air forces, non-State armed opposition groups continued to fire mortars and other projectiles into civilian neighbourhoods of western Aleppo. In the past few days alone, scores of mortars were fired into Hamdaniya, Zahra'a, Midan and Sulaymaniya. Some landed right next to the Shahba Hotel, forcing occupants, including United Nations staff, to take shelter in bunkered rooms. Five people were reported killed and 41 injured, including three representatives of the Russian Centre for Reconciliation in Aleppo, during the four days of the unilateral pause. All in all throughout October, non-State armed opposition groups fired more than 184 mortars and other projectiles into western Aleppo, reportedly killing at least 100 people, including 17 women and 22 children, and injuring 533 persons.

While the destruction of Aleppo — both east and west — is perhaps the most distressing front in the conflict at present, it is not the only place in which humanitarian needs continue to rise, driven ever higher by the relentless fighting. Hospitals and schools, critical to both the survival and growth of communities already trapped in conflict, continue to be targeted and attacked, thus increasing the humanitarian crisis in those areas. The precise details of what is happening in other parts of Syria have been documented in the Secretary-General's monthly report.

Government facilities have also come under attack. In Hama non-State armed opposition groups reportedly continued to push towards the city, now just mere kilometres away from the city limits. Two suicide bombings targeting a Government checkpoint and the Ba'ath party building in Hama city were reported on 2 October, with multiple casualties.

Each month I have come before the Security Council and presented an ever-worsening record of destruction and atrocity, grimly cataloguing the systematic destruction of a country and its people. While my job is to relay the facts to the Council, I cannot help but be incandescent with rage. Month after month it is worse and worse, and nothing is actually happening to stop the war and the suffering. The Council has been charged with the responsibility for ending this horror. The buck stops with it. This litany of horror must surely shake the Council's moral conscience, as it does around the world. Surely the international community must question the value they genuinely place in humankind, when entire neighbourhoods in one of the world's oldest cities risk annihilation, their residents treated with gross contempt as nothing more than bricks and mortar pounded into dust; when the destruction of hospitals has become the new normal; when more than 100,000 children are trapped in basements with nowhere else to hide.

This is the legacy that parties to the conflict and their supporters leave as of today. We cannot turn back the clock on what has happened, but surely the Council and its members can take some action to prevent the endless repetition of the events that will surely occur if the status quo is maintained. At the very minimum, I call upon all Council members that have operational military assets in Syria to take concrete steps to halt the aerial bombardment of civilian areas in order to deliver on their existing international obligations and, above all, to protect civilians and allow us to deliver humanitarian assistance to those in need.

As already announced on 30 September, the Secretary-General established an internal and

independent United Nations board of inquiry into the horrific incident involving a United Nations-Syrian Arab Red Crescent relief operation in Orem Al-Kubra on 19 September. The board will by Lieutenant General Abhijit Guha. He and his team have experience with similar bodies and have expertise in areas relevant to this investigation, including international humanitarian law, humanitarian operations, munitions and explosives. The board started its work earlier this week, and it is expected to deliver its findings in early December. The board's report will be an internal document of the United Nations. However, the Secretary-General intends to make available a summary of the board's findings. I urge all parties concerned to extend their full cooperation to the board.

As I have stated previously, deliberate interference and restrictions by the parties to the conflict, most notably the Syrian Government, continue to prevent the effective delivery of aid. On 19 September, the United Nations submitted its inter-agency convoy plan for the month of October, which included requests to reach some 962,000 people across 29 besieged, hard-to-reach and priority cross-line locations. Based on current procedures, a response was expected around 30 September. The Syrian authorities responded on 7 October, granting full and partial approvals for 25 locations and 63 per cent of the beneficiaries requested by the United Nations, while denying access to four locations. Denied locations included, once again, eastern Aleppo, as well as three areas in rural Damascus. Last week, on 18 October, the November monthly inter-agency convoy plan was submitted to the Syrian authorities. The plan includes 18 requests to reach 904,500 people in need in 25 besieged and hard-to-reach areas. A response is expected tomorrow.

To put things into perspective, last month only six of the 33 requested locations were reached. In August only four inter-agency convoys were deployed as a result of late approvals of the monthly plan, delays in the issuance of facilitation letters, requirements for additional approvals above and beyond the two steps agreed with the Government in April, lack of adherence to agreed protocols at checkpoints and insecurity. For same reasons, this month only five aid convoys have been able to proceed so far: Duma on 19 October, Dar Kabira on 20 October, Moadimiya this past Sunday, Al-Houla on Monday and Al-Waer today.

All in all in the past three months, the United Nations has been unable to deploy the first convoy until the third week of the month. The first cross-line convoy in August deployed only 23 August. The one in September deployed on 19 September. And the one in October deployed on 19 October. That means that no aid reached many of those most in need in besieged and hard-to-reach locations for the first three weeks of each of the past three months. And while airlifts to Qamishly continued these past few weeks, air drops to deir ez-Zor needed to be suspended, as one Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteer was hit by shrapnel from shelling by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant while at the collection site.

Moreover, the removal of lifesaving medicines and medical supplies by the Syrian authorities, such as surgical kits, midwifery kits and emergency kits, has continued unabated. So far this year, between January and September 220 tons of medical supplies were delivered to besieged and hard-to-reach areas as part of inter-agency convoys. But 65 tons of medicines and medical supplies were not. These last few weeks alone the Syrian authorities removed or prevented the loading of nearly six tons of medical supplies, mostly surgical materials, diarrhoeal and midwifery kits, intravenous fluids, anesthetics and various medicines, from inter-agency convoys: to Duma on 19 October, Dar Kabira on 20 October, Moadamiya on 23 October, Al-Waer on 24 September, Zabadani and Madayya on 25 September, and Al-Rastan and Duma — aborted — on 27 and 28 September. Those restrictions are not only violations of international law and Security Council resolutions, they are actions deliberately and cynically designed to inflict more unnecessary suffering on civilians living in besieged and hard-to-reach locations.

Throughout the country nearly 8 million children have lost their parents, their homes and their schools. They have suffered immense emotional and physical trauma. Children in besieged eastern Aleppo were due to resume school in late September. They did not. Instead, shell-shocked children are retrieved from rubble and left writhing in bloody clothes on dirty hospital floors. They are stuck in hideouts. They cannot play, they cannot sleep. That has become the reality for 100,000 children in eastern Aleppo. Across the country, as many know, one in four schools has ceased to function. More than 52,000 teachers have left their jobs. Over 2 million children remain out of school, and another 400,000 are at risk of dropping out as the horrors of this brutal and savage war continue unabated. Hundreds of thousands of Syrian children have become stateless. It

does not matter that many of us are trying to reach them and would reach them if we could; those children who are somehow just surviving, feeling abandoned by the world, abandoned to face their future alone.

What future do these children have — illiterate, orphaned, starved and maimed? What future does a country have when its next generation is a lost generation? These children do not have the luxury of waiting for another Geneva, Vienna or Lausanne agreement to succeed. They need our protection now. What happened to "never again"? What happened to our commitment to protect the most vulnerable, those who face mass atrocities? What happened to the Council's responsibility to act in a timely and decisive manner? There is surely nothing timely nor decisive about the world's approach to Syria thus far. The international community cannot fail the children of Aleppo, as it did in Srebrenica, Cambodia and Rwanda.

There is no question today as to whether the members of the Council know what is going on — we clearly and tragically do. The question today is: What will we do? What steps will we take to ensure that people in dire need get assistance? Humanitarians stand ready to continue to deliver to any and all in need, but that is not enough. Action must be taken, and safe access must be made possible. For that to happen, the violence must be stopped, and it is within our power to stop it. If we do not take action, there will be no Syrian people or Syria to save — that will be the Council's legacy, our generation's shame. It is in our hands today to take the right path and avert the looming irreversible tragedy of our time.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2016/873) and Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for his briefing, even if it leaves us more anguished than before.

Our delegation once again takes the floor in the understanding that it is our responsibility, as elected members of the Security Council, to give our electors, the membership gathered here, our opinion on the issue at hand, even if the situation has not changed much since we last discussed it. People tend to think that a great deal is accomplished in these sorts of deliberations. To save time, I could say that my statement last month (see S/PV.7780) could serve as my statement today, but I do not think that that is the case, because every time we meet the situation is more tragic. Four months ago when we met, I believe it was on the topic of Syria, we recalled the words of the American poet Robert Allen Zimmerman and his well-known lyrics:

> "How many deaths will it take till he knows that too many people have died?"

The only positive development over the course of those four months is that Mr. Zimmerman, that is Bob Dylan, has been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. That is the only good news in that regard.

The scenario is increasingly discouraging. We continue to see a pitched battle in which thousands of defenceless civilians have lost their lives, hostages to a situation where they are neither perpetrators or accomplices. The situation has simply become their reality, controlled by those who manipulate their interests in that part of the world.

The many initiatives for dialogue on Syria have come up against the inability of the Council to defuse the situation. The General Assembly has also held an informal meeting on the subject, and we have seen a New Zealand initiative, with backing from many States, aimed at finding points of convergence in order to improve the situation on the ground in any way possible. We have sought to find a way to have some impact — so that the bombing stops, so that people stop dying unnecessarily.

We will support all of those initiatives since, in the face of impotence, we must do something. It is difficult to keep repeating our speeches, citing principles of international humanitarian law but not enforcing them. It is difficult to keep repeating that hostilities must cease immediately, that civilians must be protected and that the principles of humanitarian law must be respected. A few days ago, a Venezuelan colleague said that the responsibility for the crisis is shared by all members of the Security Council, but certainly it lies more heavily on those who support or finance either of the parties to the conflict. They bear greater responsibility for what is going on — a slaughterhouse.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): Today's briefing highlights once again the horror of the situation in Syria. After nearly six years, the conflict gets even more brutal and shocking. The situation currently unfolding in eastern Aleppo, where the presence of a few hundred terrorists is being used as a pretext for indiscriminate attacks that are bringing misery and death to more than 250,000 civilians, presents a new

and profoundly disturbing low. We need to ask ourselves how the situation has been allowed to get so bad, but more importantly, what are we going to do about it?

Bringing humanitarian relief to the people of Syria remains an urgent priority. New Zealand will continue working with Spain and Egypt as co-leads in the Council's consideration of humanitarian issues in Syria, but it should be clear to everyone that even if, by some miracle, the Syrian Government decided to relent in its wilful obstruction of humanitarian assistance — and we see little hope of that happening — that alone cannot make much of a difference on the ground unless the bombs stop dropping and the cessation of hostilities is restored.

It was that fundamental reality that led New Zealand to push Council members to set aside the recent history of failed efforts and focus on what the Council can now agree to do to help stop the slaughter and make space for humanitarian relief and a return to dialogue. We knew that it would not be easy and that we would get pushback from various quarters. Even so, we considered it our responsibility as a member of the Council to try to find a way for the Council to act. The continued inability of the most powerful members of the Council to effectively address this issue is nothing short of tragic. General Assembly politics are being put ahead of people and, once again, preventing agreement on effective international action.

We are appalled that Russia will not step back from its current assault on eastern Aleppo for long enough to allow the seeds of peace to begin to take root, or use its influence to change the Syrian Government's behaviour. Humanitarian pauses may give some glimmer of hope but, for now, the bombardment of eastern Aleppo and its civilian population has resumed. It is brutal, cruel and indiscriminate. It is fundamentally at odds with international humanitarian law. It must stop. We must also register our deep disappointment that other permanent members declined to engage meaningfully on the key provision in our draft of what effective Council action might look like, other than to insist on language that had already proven unacceptable.

Earlier this week, we had a curious situation in which one side of the debate said that the key paragraph in our draft resolution (S/2016/846) was not acceptable because it would stop all air attacks over Aleppo, and the other side said that it was not acceptable because it would not. Both cannot be right. Yet for now, there is no prospect of navigating through these mutually inconsistent positions.

We understand that a third failed draft resolution in as many weeks would serve no one, and certainly not the people of Syria. But the problem we are looking to address has not gone away, and neither will we. We will continue to push for effective political action to halt the catastrophe that is unfolding, and our draft remains available as a basis for possible future action by the Council. But for any Council action to be effective, the Council has to come together and live up to its responsibilities under the Charter. We know that the divisions on the issue are acute and reflect the sad realities of today's international situation, but while we cannot escape those realities, the Council must be more than an echo chamber of developments elsewhere. We need to at least be willing to try to get past the current divisions and distrust. If we do not, the performance of the Council and its members in addressing the Syrian tragedy will be judged harshly by history.

Sides with influence over the parties on the ground, and those directly involved in the conflict, bear responsibility for the ongoing slaughter. But Council members bear responsibility for how the Council responds, or fails to.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as representative of the Russian Federation.

That means I will have to discuss Mr. O'Brien's statement. My colleagues on the Council may have noticed that Russia tries not to criticize the leadership of the United Nations. We take great pains in our efforts to work with the United Nations humanitarian staff, especially those on the ground. We understand how hard and dangerous their work is and what difficult conditions they often have to operate in Syria, where they are in constant contact with our embassy, which does everything it can to help them to obtain practical results in their humanitarian efforts on Syrian territory. But Mr. O'Brien's statement today compels me to make some critical comments, particularly his supercilious smile when he suggested that United Nations staff are infallible. I do not think there is anything to smile about.

If we needed to be preached to, we would go to church. If we wanted to hear poetry, we would go to a theatre. When we invite United Nations staff, especially senior Secretariat officials, to the Security Council, we expect objective analysis of what has happened,

which is clearly not what we got from Mr. O'Brien. I have various things to say that were not covered in his somewhat verbose statement.

Thanks to the active work of Russian experts, the number of Syrian settlements now included in the ceasefire has increased to 847. Almost 70 opposition groups have said that they will accede to the cessation of hostilities. Negotiations are continuing with the commanders of armed groups in the governorates of Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Quneitra. Russia is providing Syrians with humanitarian assistance in alignment with the Government and social organizations. Our foreign partners have joined our efforts. Many tons of food and medical equipment have been supplied, including with the participation of the Russian reconciliation centre in Hmeymim.

Russia continues to do everything in its power to relieve the situation of the residents of Aleppo, whose eastern districts have been held hostage by armed groups led by the terrorist group Jabhat Al-Nusra. Last week, in response to a United Nations appeal and as a gesture of good will, a decision was made to halt all Russian and Syrian air force flights in the region of Aleppo starting on 18 October at 10 a.m. local time. Planes have been flying no closer to the city than 10 kilometres, and the moratorium on flights is now in its eighth day.

Mr. O'Brien did not have a word to say about the moratorium. His statement implied that the air strikes had not stopped for a single day and might even be continuing as we speak. If he has evidence that any air strikes occurred, let him by all means produce it. In other words, if he disagrees that there have been no air strikes for the past eight days, I ask him to produce it. If he has no such evidence contradicting the fact that there have been no air strikes for eight days, that renders his entire statement dishonest. He spoke of eastern Aleppo as though it were under continual attack from chemical weapons. I would ask him to produce a single fact about this. He should understand that he is not here to tell a brilliant story but to deliver a report on the realities of a situation. He spoke as if the residents of eastern Aleppo were sitting there in the expectation that a chemical weapon might explode over their heads at any moment. Let him produce just one fact in support of that, or leave this kind of storytelling to the sort of novel he might end up writing one day.

For three days, starting on 20 October, a 11-hour humanitarian pause was instituted daily and subsequently extended by a day. However, the situation in Aleppo has been exacerbated by the fact that the long-promised separation of the moderate opposition from Al-Nusra has still not materialized. The American side has not fulfilled its obligation in that regard. The specific explanation given was that it would take seven no-fly days to sort the moderates from the terrorists. The Russian and Syrian moratorium on military flights over Aleppo is now in its eighth day, while the moderates and the terrorists have still not been separated. We hope that the Lausanne-format discussions can provide some movement in that direction.

During the humanitarian pause, an attempt was made to organize the medical evacuation that the United Nations humanitarian staff have constantly claimed to be so essential. Buses and medical vehicles were prepared to transport the sick and wounded. For civilians who wanted to leave the city, six humanitarian corridors were equipped with stations providing hot food and first aid. Additional beds were set up in hospitals in western Aleppo. In order to enable militants to leave the city and travel towards the Turkish border or Idlib unhindered, two corridors were opened in the area of the Castello road and the Souq Al-Hai market. The Syrian army command withdrew its forces at a distance from the exit corridors so that the fighters could safely leave Aleppo and avoid possible provocations.

How have events unfolded since then? Four days later, United Nations representatives suddenly announced that only two people had agreed to leave the city. And then those two apparently changed their minds. So what became of the 200 sick and wounded who we had been assured were in dire need of assistance and for whose sake Russia had been asked to stop the air strikes? Instead of enabling us to conduct a medical evacuation, the illegal armed groups began demanding that painkillers and antibiotics be delivered to eastern Aleppo and that wounded militants get medical help. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria — which has lately virtually abandoned the fundamental direction of its work on a political settlement and has of its own volition switched over to a parallel track — played along with this. Frankly, we do not understand who is running the United Nations effort in Syria. Is it Mr. O'Brien or Mr. Egeland? Mr. Egeland gives everyone the impression that it is in fact he who is heading up the humanitarian work in this

crucial area. And the United Nations staff in Syria are in total turmoil.

The armed opposition that is mixed up with the terrorists has blocked the humanitarian corridors and has been directing fire along them. Jihadists have been organizing show executions. Taking advantage of the lull, the insurgents have begun to regroup and prepare for active offensives aimed at breaking through the front line. The Al-Nusra fighters and their associates have rejected Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura's offers for a guaranteed exit from Aleppo. As early as 21 October, the field commander of the Harakat Nour Al-Din Al-Zenki, without waiting for the end of the humanitarian pause, announced the beginning of the decisive battle for Aleppo, and a press release issued jointly by representatives of the Syrian National Coalition and the Free Syrian Army attacked the United Nations humanitarian initiative sharply.

The illegal armed groups, along with the local council in Aleppo, have once again demonstrated that they prefer to use residents as bargaining chips and human shields to hide behind. By the way, that obvious fact is never reflected in either the Secretary-General's reports or Mr. O'Brien's briefings. The outside sponsors embedded in groups in eastern Aleppo have been either unable or unwilling to exert a positive influence on the insurgents and convince them to stop shelling, release civilians or leave themselves. Moreover, the groups continue to receive arms and ammunition, including TOW anti-tank missiles and American-produced man-portable air defence systems.

We have to regretfully conclude that the United Nations did not properly think through its operation for transporting the sick and wounded. Its work with the opposition groups and local council in the city was neglected. Nor did the United Nations put the needed pressure on the sponsors of the illegal armed groups to ensure that they cooperated with humanitarian personnel. At the same time, attempts began to shift the blame for the problem onto someone else. Completely unsupported claims were made that the wounded were supposedly afraid to leave eastern Aleppo for fear of some kind of reprisals from the Syrian Government. They began asking us for additional security guarantees for the evacuees, ignoring the fact that they had long ago been given those assurances already.

Yet another real opportunity to normalize the situation in Aleppo has been missed. The deficiencies of the United Nations personnel are disappointing. After asking for Russia's help in implementing their poorly thought-out initiatives, they have been unable to come through on their part of the job when it mattered. That exceedingly unprofessional approach has sometimes cost us dearly as well. On 20 October, three officers from the reconciliation centre in Hmeymim were injured in the course of their duties as they prepared for the medical evacuation. On 24 October, Mr. O'Brien made a statement in which he attempted to distribute responsibility for the failure of the evacuation measures equally between the Aleppo local council, the insurgents and the Government. In that connection, it should be recalled that Damascus had raised objections only regarding the artificial linking of the issues of the medical evacuation and the supply of medicines. In general, the Government has displayed goodwill and constructiveness, and we have been working very productively with it on this.

We are still open to cooperating with United Nations humanitarian agencies on every issue related to assisting those in need. At the same time, we are still awaiting some genuine effort of the opposition and its sponsors, who so far have done nothing but create obstacles, disrupt humanitarian operations and threaten humanitarian personnel. In future, we believe it would be advisable to introduce humanitarian pauses only with firm guarantees from the United Nations as to its readiness for a medical evacuation.

The negative attitude to local pacification on the part of some of our partners and, unfortunately, some United Nations representatives is incomprehensible. It is that practice, of which the end to the blockade of Darayya is a successful example, that will enable us to normalize situations through direct agreements with local residents. However, at the moment the only insurgents being evacuated are irreconcilable militants, mostly from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Nusra, who are not ready to lay down their arms. The peaceful civilians are staying at home.

What forced displacement are we talking about? It appears that someone would like to see the humanitarian situation in the difficult cities remain in limbo. Does somebody want to play along with the insurgents and strengthen their position? That is a two-faced attitude that has nothing to do with caring for people.

Despite the promises of some members of the International Syria Support Group to work with the

terrorists of Ahrar Al-Sham, the Shiite enclaves of Al-Fu'ah and Kafraya are still on the list of the most problematic areas. We have not succeeded in getting Turkey to open the Nusaybin-Qamishli border crossing, as a result of which assistance to Hasakah province has had to be supplied by air.

In discussing the humanitarian situation in Syria, we cannot fail to mention the effect of the unilateral economic and trade sanctions against Damascus. Their victims are the ordinary Syrians who are suffering under the siege as a result of the continuing deterioration of the country's socioeconomic infrastructure, which was of a very high standard before the start of the conflict.

We cannot agree with the conclusion of the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/873) that it is impossible to make progress on the political track until the cessation of hostilities is restored. That runs counter to Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), which includes no such link. A political settlement should be the top priority, for the United Nations Secretariat as well as for the Security Council. The same applies to the fight against terrorism. And our approaches to solving the fundamental issues should be united rather than fluctuating according to the geopolitical mood in one capital or another.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words about New Zealand's initiative. We are grateful to the delegation of New Zealand for its attempt to find a position that the members of the Security Council could unite around and that could somehow enable all of us to take a step towards a political settlement in Syria and to relieve the humanitarian situation there. But any such attempt must respond to a fundamental question — how do we continue the fight against terrorism within the parameters it proposes?

In our view, the fundamental positions — which we all agree on; they are affirmed in unanimous Council resolution — are that the terrorists in both Syria and Iraq must be deprived of their safe havens, and that the ceasefire regime should not apply to the terrorist organizations Jabhat Al-Nusra and ISIL. That means that whatever ceasefire regimes are instituted, we must always continue to fight the terrorists. We have observed with regret that when such regimes are introduced, the terrorists, as well as a number of organizations that cooperate with them, are able to regroup, gather strength and re-emerge at a new level of militant activity. If a project could be launched that would enable us to fight the terrorists on a large scale while improving the humanitarian situation and putting us on track for a political settlement, we would all be extremely grateful.

I now resume my functions as President.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I had not intended to speak today. I thought this would be one of the occasions when we would go into closed consultations and talk to one another rather than to the gallery. But I feel compelled, owing to the statement by the Russian representative and the attack on the United Nations, which has been trying in good faith to reach people in desperate need and which I think has not gone far enough in calling out a permanent member of the Security Council. It has been trying around the clock to work with the armed groups, with countries that have attempted to exert influence, and with the Russian Federation, and was never really given notice as to what the Russian Federation's plans were. Russia decides that it is going to have a pause, decides the pause is over and presents faits accomplis to the United Nations and the international community, even though it is the people of the United Nations who are there, vulnerable, on the ground, trying to make deal happen for the sake of the most vulnerable.

I would like to respond with a few comments. I believe that what we just heard with regard to the New Zealand draft resolution (S/2016/846) is that if a draft resolution could be produced that ratifies what the Russian Federation is doing, it would be happy to support it. The representative of New Zealand should bear that in mind. I would like to say — because one of the things that the Under-Secretary-General mentioned was the shelling of western Aleppo out of eastern Aleppo and that was also one of the things that the Ambassador of the Russian Federation went on at some length about — that we condemn the shelling of civilian areas in western Aleppo. It is outrageous. Is Russia prepared to condemn any aerial bombardment of eastern Aleppo? Does Russia believe that all the children who are being killed in eastern Aleppo are themselves members of Al-Qaida? Is that what happens — that you come out of the womb and you are an Al-Qaida member, right from the beginning?

Of course, Russia cannot condemn the shelling and systematic aerial bombardment of eastern Aleppo, because Russia is carrying out that systematic bombardment of eastern Aleppo, and because Russia

has brought to bear in the conflict weapons that even a brutal Syrian regime had never used before — bunker-buster weapons that are designed to hit huddled families, and hospitals that have had to be rebuilt several stories down in basements. They are designed to target people burrowed into the ground. They are not designed for terrorists but to militarily conquer eastern Aleppo by making civilians relent and cry uncle.

What is so remarkable and troubling about the presentation we heard today is that what Russia really wants from the United Nations is credit. Congratulations, Russia, you have stopped using incendiary weapons for a couple of days. Thank you for not using cluster bombs in civilian areas. Thank you for staying the hand of brutality with regard to bunker-buster weapons. No one gets congratulations and credit for not committing war crimes for a day, or a week. That is not how the international system is structured, and nor how it should ever be. If we look for an indicator of Russia's intentions, as we heard from Under-Secretary-General O'Brien, there is the leaflet that Russian and Syrian planes passed out. What is said in the Council sounds so benevolent that one would think Russia is like the Red Cross.

And then there is the leaflet, which is what they dropped into the actual theatre where desperate civilians are living. I will read out from the leaflet, which states,

> "This is your last hope. Save yourselves. If you do not leave these areas immediately, you will be annihilated. We have opened a safe exit passage for you. Make a quick decision. Save yourselves. You know that everyone has given up on you. They have left you alone to face your doom, and help is available from on one."

Would the Russian Ambassador state for the record that Russia had nothing to do with these leaflets, which came out of Russian and Syrian planes? I ask those on the Council who support the Syrian regime if this is a leaflet behind which they would also throw their weight? Russia cannot have it both ways, pretending to care about the well-being of the people in eastern Aleppo, while at the same time threatening to annihilate those who remain in their homes.

The representative of Russia made an announcement with regard to six humanitarian corridors and urged people, including those who were armed, as well as medical evacuation units, to take those corridors. We worked very hard with the United Nations and others to try to use whatever influence we could to make that happen. Here was our challenge. The families of those who needed medical evacuation or, as was said today, "the so-called wounded" — they are not the so-called wounded; they are the wounded by your bombs, Sir — notwithstanding their grave and potentially fatal injuries, were terrified. They were terrified of entrusting their fates to the people who had been bombing their neighbourhoods. That is an unfortunate fact, but it is not a crazy one. How would we have reacted if we had been there and subjected to the siege; if Russia and the Syrian regime had refused to allow food in since 7 July; if a leaflet threatening annihilation had been sent; and if we had been told, "Here are your six corridors. Come trust us. We have a humanitarian objective; we want to help you with your medical issues."

We threw our weight behind it because we were so desperate, as well, to get these people out and we wanted to support the World Health Organization and the United Nations in their on-the-ground tactical efforts. They do not become "so-called wounded" just because they are terrified of ending up like the people in the Caesar photographs. They are wounded, desperate and terrified of being pulverized by the Russian Federation and the Syrian regime.

Today, we have spoken a lot about both sides of Aleppo, but Under-Secertary-General O'Brien also referenced the shelling in Idlib. I would ask the members of the Council who have not already done so — and it is very hard to make oneself do this — to look at the photographs of what happened in Hass today. Look at the kids carrying their backpacks — frozen — as they attempted to go to school before being hit either by the Russian Federation or the Syrian regime. More than a dozen parachute bombs fell on a school today. It is not history. It is not Srebrenica 20 years ago. It is not Rwanda 22 years ago. It is Grozny, but it is today and in eastern Aleppo.

The Ambassador of the Russian Federation said that if we needed to be preached to, we would go to church. Given what is happening, I think that it might be useful if more people went to church.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): You said, Sir, that the United Nations should stick to facts. Today, Stephen O'Brien stuck religiously to facts. The problem for you, Mr. President, is that they are not facts that you like. Let me just repeat three of the facts that I wrote down from Stephen's statement. They are all facts, reality

and in stark contrast to the absurd and surreal fantasy theatre that we are hearing from Russia.

The first fact is that Aleppo has become a kill zone, with 400 people — too many of whom were children — who have been killed since Stephen's latest briefing to the Council (see S/PV.7780). The second fact is that Syrian and Russian forces have not protected medical facilities and have, indeed, deliberately attacked hospitals. The third fact concerns the infamous leaflet, stating "This is your last hope; you will be annihilated". Those are three facts. Everything else that Stephen said aligns with my information and concerns facts, but they are not facts that Russia likes. It is depressing to see the level to which Russia is descending to defend the indefensible.

What needs to happen now to allow humanitarian access? Three things need to happen. Step one requires immediately stopping the bombing — as Stephen mentioned — everywhere: in Idlib, eastern Aleppo and across Syria. Step two requires Russia to use its influence with the Syrian regime so that it cooperates with all those aid agencies seeking to bring aid into Syria. Step three requires allowing genuine, meaningful humanitarian pauses that are long enough and coordinated with the United Nations so that aid can go in and people requiring medical evacuation can get out.

What should we, the Security Council, do about it? I agree very much with almost everything the representative of New Zealand said. Like Gerard, I am appalled that Russia will not step back. I am appalled that Russia used the right to veto a perfectly reasonable and moderate draft resolution. I disagree with Gerard on the point that there is some sort of sense of symmetry between those who are blocking for one reason and those who are blocking for another. There is no symmetry between those of us who called for an end to the bombing and those who say that the bombing must continue. The United Kingdom will support any effort to stop the bombing and any draft resolution that is clear enough that step one has got to be an end to the bombing. We should not try to find the midpoint between the position of stopping and not stopping the bombing. It is not possible to do that, and we should not even want to try.

Finally, the one point on which I do agree with Vitaly concerns fighting terrorism. I believe that we all agree on that. We all want to see terrorism defeated in Syria and everywhere else. That is not what divides us, but that is not the real issue. In our view, there are approximately 200 terrorists from Al-Nusrah in eastern Aleppo. Russia has a slightly different view and says that they number approximately 1,000. Let us take Russia's number of 1,000. That is still only one-hundredth the number of children in eastern Aleppo. There are 100,000 children in eastern Aleppo. If the genuine target of the military action is the 1,000 terrorists, why are the military bombs being used so indiscriminately? Why are bunker-buster bombs, which are designed to take out more than very precise targets, being used? That is an indefensible military strategy in eastern Aleppo. How many of the people in that school in Idlib today were really terrorists? I suspect that the answer is zero.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): As the representative of a country so profoundly attached to the United Nations and its values, I would like to clarify several points.

First, I thank Mr. Stephen O'Brien for his briefing, his courage and the work that he and his team have carried out. When the credibility of a major Office of the United Nations is called into question in such a way, it must be defended. And that is what I would like to do publicly today in defending the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and paying tribute to the work of all the humanitarian personnel who put their lives on the line every day and night to save others. I think that that deserves the support of the community of nations.

We are all aware that the so-called humanitarian pauses, which are decided upon unilaterally without prior consultation whatsoever, are not a solution. They are welcome, of course, but they are not a panacea. We all know that it is impossible to obtain access authorization in just a few hours to allow for the entry of humanitarian workers and the evacuation of the wounded and their families. Blaming the United Nations for such objective factors is akin to firing at an ambulance, both figuratively and literally, because we know that hospitals and health-care personnel are often the targets of deliberate air strikes. The key to it all is to put an end to the hostilities and, in particular, to the bombing. That is the basis on which we can build. It is therefore urgent to exert maximum political pressure on the regime and its supporters. That was the goal of the recent General Assembly meeting following the

veto by Russia of the draft resolution by put forward by France and Spain.

That pressure must be increased until the tragedy taking place in Aleppo has been brought to an end. We cannot give up on that. I have said it and I will reiterate that Aleppo is to Syria what Sarajevo was to Bosnia and Guernica was to Spain. That means that the situation must be viewed as a large-scale humanitarian tragedy — a black hole that swallows up and destroys all of the values that the United Nations holds dear and a promise that a horrendous tragedy will occur if we fail to act now.

I would also like to make a few brief comments on the issue of terrorism. I have made these comments before in this forum. Not only does Aleppo not help to combat terrorism — an issue which should, in fact, unite the entire international community — but Aleppo also systematically helps to spur radicalization and, by extension, terrorism. I will echo the words of my Minister for Foreign Affairs, who stated in this Chamber (see S/PV.7785) that the battle of Aleppo is a gift to terrorists and those who become the victims of terrorist attacks, like France, pay the price. As far as I and my country are concerned, this is an issue that affects our national security.

My second comment concerns humanitarian aid. I would simply like to point out that we all know — and here too let us call a spade a spade so that we can make some headway — that the Syrian regime and its supporters are responsible for blocking the humanitarian aid. I have already stated that here. It is particularly unfair and completely out of place to blame the United Nations when humanitarian workers are on the front lines attempting to save lives.

Lastly, the international community cannot remain silent on the abuses that are committed daily in Syria. If we and the rest of the world believe in the work of the United Nations and the values that unite us as an Organization, something must be done. If not, we will to bear the collective and individual responsibility for it for a long time to come. In that regard, the High Commissioner for Human Rights did not mince words when he spoke about crimes that have never before been committed, including war crimes and crimes against humanity. He stated that light must be shed on serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Impunity and weakness cannot be an option when we are dealing with a tragedy like that taking place in Aleppo. In that regard, France welcomes the adoption by the Human Rights Council on 21 October of a resolution (A/HRC/RES/S-25/1) demanding that the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic to conduct a special independent investigation on events in Aleppo and identify the alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses.

In the same vein, we will pay particular attention to the findings of the internal board of inquiry a, established by the Secretary-General after the bombing of a United Nations-Syria Red Cross aid convoy on 19 September in the north-west of Aleppo, which, I recall, caused the deaths of more than 20 people. To make a long story short, the onus is on the parties to a conflict to protect civilians and ensure humanitarian access and medical care. The protection of humanitarian workers in particular — as provided for by resolution 2286 (2016), on health-care personnel and infrastructure — is vital. We must make a strong appeal for the immediate cessation of attacks on such personnel and infrastructure.

Once again, France calls on the Syrian regime and Russia to put an end to air strikes on Aleppo, and not only for a few hours, and on that basis, along with the rest of us, to commit to building the political transition needed in order to find a genuine political solution to the crisis in Syria. As long as that has not occurred and the tragedy unfolding in Aleppo continues, political pressure must continue and will increase. Like many others, I would like to issue another appeal, which we hope will become louder and be heard and responded to in a tangible manner.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General O'Brien for his briefing. The situation in Syria, and in particular in Aleppo, has been escalating and has resulted in a serious humanitarian situation. The international community should work together and take swift action to ease tensions.

China welcomes the recent humanitarian emergency initiative taken by the Russian and Syrian Governments in order to help the United Nations in evacuating the sick and the wounded. However, due to the fact that that initiative did not receive a response from other parties in Syria, the United Nations operation to evacuate the sick and the wounded failed to be implemented. China calls on the parties in Syria to effectively implement the agreement on the cessation of hostilities, work

actively with the United Nations to create the conditions conducive to achieving a ceasefire that would ease the humanitarian situation, and move the process for a political solution forward.

On the question of Syria, the international community must remain committed to a political solution, which is the ultimate way to resolve the current situation. Efforts should be made to encourage the parties in Syria to resolve their disputes through dialogue. Such efforts must be focused in a balanced manner on the four tracks of a ceasefire, political negotiations, humanitarian relief operations and synergies to fight terrorism. China welcomes the diplomatic efforts of the United Nations, Russia and the United States of America in Lausanne and Geneva, and hopes that the parties concerned will soon reach consensus on concrete issues so as to ease tensions, help the parties to resume negotiations and, through a Syrian-led political process, arrive at a settlement that is acceptable to all parties concerned in order to address the root cause of the humanitarian situation in Syria.

The incessant terrorist attacks by terrorists in Syria have seriously hampered the United Nations humanitarian efforts. Efforts to ease the Syrian humanitarian situation must not neglect the fight against terrorism. The international community should strengthen coordination and unify standards and resolutely fight all terrorist groups, as designated by the Council, including the Islamic State, and work together to prevent the breeding and spread of terrorism.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): In the end, there has been a genuine debate among the members of the Security Council, which we commend. In other cases, it has proven impossible to discuss issues as complicated as those we are witnessing in the humanitarian field. Now, not only are we calling into question the United Nations system and the reports being presented, but we also recognize with some concern that the issue of humanitarian aid is being distorted and politicized. But this happens only when it is in the interests of certain permanent members — very influential members — of the Security Council. The humanitarian topic is a complex one that is salient in all the conflicts that we are, unfortunately, seeing take place in the Middle East and Africa: in Libya, Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Palestine. However, I believe we have never discussed here, and perhaps will never discuss, the humanitarian topic in Yemen in a debate like this one, or the topic of the humanitarian situation in Iraq, which continues to combat terrorists and continues its advance on Mosul. But we are not going to discuss that here. I am sure that we have not discussed nor will we discuss what the humanitarian consequences were of the foreign intervention in Libya, or of the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip.

In other words, in the Council the humanitarian topic is used in a political way. It is manipulated; it is distorted. And in this specific case it is used to attack the Russian Federation for its active participation in the fight against terrorism in Syria. What is being disregarded here is the complexity of this conflict — its origins are being deliberately ignored. Most of the permanent members of the Security Council, the important permanent members, have been involved in this conflict since it began. They have fuelled this war. They have encouraged it. They have financed it. They trained groups that later become terrorists. And now in all of Syria we are witnessing a tragic situation, where there are deaths of innocent civilians, basically at the hands of terrorism and owing to the dynamics of war.

We think that we should not lose sight of this, because the solution to the humanitarian issue is to end this war. The way to do that is by relaunching talks and political negotiaitons among all the stakeholders, but particularly between the Russian Federation and the United States, in order to reach a negotiated political solution to end this conflict. We cannot continue to stoke this war. We cannot allow the groups that call themselves the moderate opposition to continue to fail to disassociate themselves from terrorist groups. We cannot allow other foreign Powers to continue to arm those groups, and thereby continue to indirectly arm the terrorist groups.

We in the Security Council need clearly to call things what they. We have here a terrible case of manipulation of the humanitarian issue in order to attack Russia. Our position is that we understand that the Government of Syria has a legitimate right to reconquer all its territory and a legitimate right to combat terrorism. Of course, we do not support either the deliberate bombing of civilians nor attacks against civilian infrastructure. We have consistently rejected that in all conflicts. But we understand that the situation in Syria is complex. All of Aleppo — east and west — is involved in the conflict. Almost 1.5 million people live in western Aleppo, while 250,000 live in eastern Aleppo, where

terrorist groups have holed themselves up. Reports of their numbers vary, but this is not about numbers. This is about civilians being used as human shields. The Security Council cannot declare eastern Aleppo as a sanctuary so that terrorist groups can hunker down. Flying in eastern Aleppo are the flags of Da'esh and those of other terrorist groups. Other combatants said to be from the moderate opposition are intermingled and fighting side by side with terrorists against the Syrian Government.

We are therefore discussing here a partial picture of the humanitarian issue. It is a terrible situation, and we could hear thousands of stories about the fates of innocent civilians in this war. This war has to end. The Government of Syria must fully exercise sovereignty over all its territory, and all must fight terrorism together, which is the main enemy of the Syrian people. What would they have us do here in the Council? That there be no military operations in eastern Aleppo? That terrorists be allowed to continue to be holed up in the city? I do not know, but I believe we cannot make any country here responsible for this type of leaflet. This is a war, and a complex situation. But it seems to us that there has been a major effort to establish humanitarian pauses to allow the civilian population to leave Aleppo through the corridors that have been opened up. It has been said here that civilians have returned to the city. But we cannot fail to mention that the terrorist groups have executed civilians who have tried to leave the city. Civilians are being used as human shields — the same thing is being denounced in Mosul. What are we going to do in Mosul? Should we suspend the offensive to recapture the city from the hands of the terrorists?

I would therefore urge the members of the Council — we have heard once again tragic reports. We are also seeing the deliberate use of the humanitarian situation for political ends. We, who have no ability to influence this conflict militarily, call on those that are doing so to abandon propaganda rhetoric and political manipulation and return to the path of dialogue so that, by assuming our responsibilities as an organ of the United Nations, we can present to the world a proposal for a political solution whereby the Syrians themselves can resolve this situation without any further foreign interference. Foreign interference must end. Propagandist rhetoric must end. We should work honeslty to combat terrorism head-on and to find a solution that ends the humanitarian tragedy in Syria.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I want to apologize to the representative of Ukraine, who was on the list right after the United Kingdom. But my eye accidentally jumped to France and I gave the floor to the representative of France, which I do not regret. I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor this time and not preventing our delegation from taking the floor today, like you did so skilfully yesterday, using your prerogative as President and showing no respect to my delegation.

I thank Mr. O'Brien very much for his sobering briefing, which once again drew an absolutely horrifying picture of the reality in and around Aleppo. It was a truthful picture, not an imagined one.

I agree with the colleague from New Zealand who said that it is unfortunate that we are not able to come together to stop this tragedy. But I am not ready to accept this collective blame, simply because it is just one delegation — it is your delegation, Mr. President — that is preventing us from doing that. Nor am I ready to accept your attack, Mr. President, on the United Nations, and personally on our own respected colleague from the United Nations, Mr. Stephen O'Brien. He just states the facts, and he is not attacking Russia at all. He is just stating the facts. Your statement in your national capacity, Mr. President, creates an impression that you are living in some sort of parallel world, a kind of twisted treality that is completely opposite to what we see and hear every day, every minute — actually for many months now — from the media, from the ground, from the witnesses, from independent services, from the United Nations sources.

The deteriorating security environment in Syria continues to negatively impact the humanitarian situation. Military activities, air strikes and shellings go unabated on all active fronts of the Syrian battlefield: Aleppo, Idlib, Rif Dimashq, Homs, Hama and so forth. It all results in a further increase in the number of people living under siege, which has now reached, as we have just heard, more than 800,000 civilians in 18 different locations.

It is impossible to comprehend that the Syrian Government continues to bomb its citizens. Just this Monday, at least 10 air strikes by the Al-Assad regime's air force and its allies hit the town of Khan Shaykhun, killing 7 civilians and injuring more than 50, according

to reports from the ground. Six civilians were killed in Russian air strikes in the town of Kafr Takharim on Monday. Two more were killed in the rocket shelling by regime forces in the town of Durin on the Al-Ghab plain. The list goes on as a grim reminder of the reality in Syria.

News reports about the leaflets disseminated by the regime forces in eastern Aleppo is more proof of the Damascus cynicism. I was going to provide a quote, but my colleague from the United States has already done so.

It is dismaying to see that instead of focusing on how to revitalize the nationwide ceasefire, the Russian Federation is moving new types of arms and bomb carriers to bases in closer proximity to Syria. Some of them are moved from the territory of Crimea, which is part of Ukraine and which Russia illegally annexed. The recent deployment of the Russian naval battle group in the vicinity of Syria sends a signal of clear intention to further bolster the bombing campaign there. It can hardly be interpreted as a confidence-building measure or as a signal that the circumstances are conducive to return to the negotiating table.

We again stress the urgent need for the United Nations to look into the alarming reports of the extensive use by Russia of incendiary weapons and other indiscriminate weapons, including bunker-busting bombs. We reiterate that those accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity and those who are behind them should be brought to justice.

Finally, we join the United Nations and our colleagues in calling on all parties to the conflict to immediately provide unconditional, unimpeded and sustained access to the people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas across Syria. Providing regular humanitarian breaks and observing human rights are the obligations of all parties to the conflict, not gestures of goodwill that one party agrees to do today and rejects tomorrow in order to gain political dividends. It is not mercy, but a duty.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I would simply like to say that we cannot accept the criticism that we did not follow procedure yesterday. We invited everyone to speak after the end of the discussion, and the Ukrainian delegation should also respect the interests of all delegations that have put their name on the speakers' list to have an opportunity to speak on the agenda item that was discussed yesterday. However, let us focus on the main topic we are discussing today.

Mr. Gimolieca (Angola): We thank under Under-Secretary-General Mr. Stephen O'Brien for his briefing and commend him once again for his tireless efforts to facilitate access for humanitarian agencies and to contribute to reaching a sustainable solution to the humanitarian needs of the millions of civilians in Syria. In the current environment, in which the United Nations and humanitarian agencies are operating in increasingly dangerous and difficult conditions, we must commend all those who keep risking their lives to help the desperate civilians trapped in this horrendous conflict.

In the past few weeks, we have witnessed an intense escalation of fighting, especially in the city of Aleppo, which has resulted in massive destruction of civilian and other essential infrastructure, as well as an overwhelming number of casualties, wounded and displaced people. It is obvious that unless there is progress in bridging the differences between the main stakeholders, in particular on the strategy to combat terrorist groups, the humanitarian and political crises will deepen, with dangerous and unpredictable consequences.

The humanitarian situation must be combined with diplomatic and political efforts towards a final resolution of the conflict. Disagreements among the members of the Council, and in particular between those involved in the conflict, will not bring peace to Syria. Therefore, we reiterate our support to the members of the Security Council that have been trying to galvanize our collective efforts to press for the relaunching of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities and for the establishment of humanitarian corridors in the worst affected areas.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I will try to be brief, because I think much of what needs to be said has already been said.

Japan's position, as the Council knows, is that we supported the draft resolution (S/2016/846) submitted by France and Spain, which called for an immediate cessation of bombing against civilians. That is something that we stand by. The Security Council should stand by the very important principle that indiscriminatory attacks on civilians must stop.

The other factor in this situation is fighting terrorism. We must fight terrorism and we must fight it strongly, but that does not justify indiscriminate attacks on civilians. I think there should be a very wide understanding and agreement on this point.

When the delegation of New Zealand proposed a draft resolution trying to unite the Security Council, we supported that move and felt that it could be a useful way of proceeding. However, as the representative of New Zealand said himself today, the situation does not seem to allow drafting to be a useful thing to do right now. We do need a better, united understanding within the Council in order to adopt a resolution.

Therefore, I once again feel, in listening to the disagreement today, that we really need to go back to the basics — saying no to indiscriminate attacks on civilians and trying to save civilians. Like France, I welcome the cessation of bombing by Russia and Syria, which lasted for a number of hours. However, the problem was that it was unilateral, and a unilateral cessation requires a lot of work to be done by the United Nations in order to make evacuations possible. Right now, I can say only that we must stop the bombing and that a ceasefire should last much longer. We should try to find a way to prevent unilateral action from Russia and Syria. Rather, we should seek an agreed cessation of hostilities.

Again, I call on the countries on the ground to realize that it is not just their strategic or tactical interests that are on the line; it is people's lives that are on the line. I urge all those around the table and all the members of the Security Council to really sit down and think again so that we can perhaps revise the draft resolution proposed by New Zealand and make it useful.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): I would to thank Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for his briefing and to start my intervention by expressing our deep gratitude to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the humanitarian partners of the United Nations on the ground in Syria for their bravery and tireless effort in assisting civilians affected by the conflict.

Today's debate on the humanitarian situation in Syria only deepens the Security Council's irreconcilable differences. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy of a doomsday scenario: that nobody will step in to help. That is the character of the tragic and harrowing human drama that we are scripting by projecting alternate realities onto the situation. The Council is too important to be relegated to witness to processes that take place outside of New York. We have before us a draft resolution put forth by New Zealand that aims to solve the humanitarian question in Aleppo. Despite the pronounced readiness to engage by almost everyone, we need walk the talk.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I, too, would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien for the clarity of his briefing. Above all, I welcome his commitment and that of his team to the cause of the Syrian people, who are being sorely tried indeed. We believe that the time has come to renew our tribute to humanitarian personnel for the sacrifices that they are willing to make, as well as to the medical staff and others who are devoted to the cause of the Syrian people.

Unfortunately, as we are all aware, the situation continues to deteriorate. Violence has become heightened in many areas, especially in eastern Aleppo, where there are hundreds of civilian victims, including, most unfortunately, many children. That does not take into account the wounded. As has also been pointed out, western Aleppo has unfortunately also been affected. I will not dwell on the figures, which unfortunately speak for themselves about the depth of the ongoing tragedy in Syria. That is why my country wishes to renew its call for a 48-hour humanitarian ceasefire, especially in eastern Aleppo, as called for by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in order to make it possible for the more than 215,000 people under siege to be assisted by humanitarian workers and to conduct the evacuation of the injured and those most vulnerable.

My country emphatically condemns attacks on humanitarian convoys, especially the one against the United Nations-Syrian Red Crescent convoy at Orem Al-Kubra on 19 September, which led to the deaths of almost 20 people. We express our support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to identify those responsible for that tragedy. In the same vein, with regard to the tragic humanitarian situation, we condemn the consistent practice of removing medical supplies and equipment from humanitarian convoys destined for people in urgent need, especially pregnant women.

When it comes to Palestinian refugees, they too are suffering because of the tragedy. My delegation condemns the deaths of four Palestinian refugees at the

Khan Eshieh refugee camp, south of Damascus. Along the same lines, we express our concern regarding the continued security constraints that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East faces in gaining access to the Yarmouk refugee camp. Those constraints also affect the situation of other Palestinian refugees.

Clearly, the question we are all asking is what the Security Council should do in these particularly serious circumstances. Unfortunately, to date the Council remains divided, especially with regard to the unacceptable situation in Aleppo. We think the time has come for the Council at last to take up its responsibilities in the face of the ongoing deteriorating situation on the ground and the continuing tragedy. We therefore once again call on Council members to demonstrate flexibility in order to reach a lasting solution. Of course, we lent our support to the draft resolution aimed at consensus submitted by New Zealand. We believe the draft resolution provides a good basis to work towards giving new impetus to the cessation of hostilities, which would make it possible not only to provide humanitarian assistance, but also to resume the political process, which we believe to be a priority. We also believe it is a priority to fight terrorist groups, especially the Islamic State and the Al-Nusra Front, with full respect for humanitarian law and international humanitarian law.

Lastly, we encourage the talks that took place at Lausanne, which are continuing in Geneva. We renew our call on countries with influence, especially the co-Chairs of International Syria Support Group, to continue their efforts for the soonest possible resumption of intra-Syrian negotiations, with a view to finding a political solution to the crisis on the basis of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) and resolution 2254 (2015).

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

I regret that Ambassador Power left the Chamber. Lately, she has tried to avoid direct polemics with me in public, and I am sorry about that, particularly since I will have to say a few words in response to her attacks on us.

Ambassador Power unfortunately resorted to a method she likes. She distorts Russia's position, presents it in some absurd way and then criticizes her own absurd rendering of that position. I noticed that Mr. O'Brien said not a word in his statement about the fact that for more than seven days now, neither Russia nor the Syrian air force has been bombing Aleppo. She says that we want to be thanked for that. We certainly do not need their thanks, but Secretary of State Kerry talked for weeks about how there had to be seven days with no bombing. It must be a pretty important point if the United States Secretary of State talks about it for weeks. And does it seem a proof of objectivity in a United Nations report (S/2016/873) when that fact goes completely unmentioned in the report? When a United Nations Under-Secretary-General says that bombings occur daily, hourly, and on top of that adds that they are practically dropping chemical weapons on the heads of the citizens of Aleppo, is that a standard of objectivity? Excuse me, that is not objectivity, it is deception.

Turning now to the leaflet that was shown. That is certainly a very controversial fact. These things are showing up everywhere on the Internet, which means that the leaflet was dropped yesterday or today. And even Ambassador Power explained that they were dropping them from Russian and Syrian planes.But our military command says that for the past seven or eight days our planes have not been within 10 kilometres of Aleppo. That must mean that American planes were dropping them, right? Or that the whole thing is a false rumour, of which there are a great many on the Internet, and who knows where else. Presenting such stuff to the Security Council and expecting it to be taken seriously is simply ludicrous. I operate on the belief that we are more serious than that here.

Ambassador Power says that the citizens of eastern Aleppo were not leaving because they are terrified of what awaits them. That is understandable. I completely agree that of course both living in and leaving the city is frightening. We proposed to the United States that our armed forces could be stationed together with American forces on the Castello Road, which could then be freely used both for humanitarian convoys' access to eastern Aleppo and for leaving the city. The United States turned that down. What about that attitude from the humanitarian contingent — "What shall we do? What shall we do?" We said what we could do — have Russian and American soldiers standing together on the Castello Road. No, they said, "You do it". Let the Russians put themselves in danger and be shot at by terrorists? We will not do that. That is just dishonest.

Ambassador Power rightly emphasized the fact — and we have discussed it at times — that the residents of western Aleppo are also under fire. Indeed, 20 people are dying every week, and 50 or 60 are being injured, on top of which they are under severe psychological strain. I am sorry that Samantha Power is not here. A few days ago, in a separate conversation with her, she said that the United States was working on the issue. They are working on it, and nothing is happening. There has been no improvement. That means that their protégés in eastern Aleppo are not doing their bidding, and that they do not know how to stop this horror. Who are they to criticize us and the Syrian Government, who are trying to suppress this breeding ground where terrorists and the other insurgents in eastern Aleppo are endangering its citizens?

Nor should we be talking only about eastern Aleppo when we discuss Syria — and, incidentally, the humanitarian situation, civilian deaths and so forth. A couple of months or more ago, the coalition, supposedly with French planes, made a strike on Manbij in northern Syria. It was reported that more than 100 people died — an entire village was destroyed. Ambassador Power promised that there would be an investigation. We heard nothing. As for what happened there or who did the bombing, we heard nothing. Recently, two Belgian planes, also from the coalition, bombed a Kurdish village. Six people died and some were injured. The Belgians say it was not them. So who was it? Ask the coalition. So why are they so upset about our bombing and say nothing about their own? Not to mention what is going on in Iraq, where there are reports that in just the past few days almost 50 civilians died and 100 people were wounded near Kirkuk. Let us hold a briefing on the situation in Iraq and those bombings in which Mr. O'Brien can undoubtedly give us a demonstration of his oratorical talent.

Just the other day in Yemen, as we all know, 200 people in a funeral procession were killed and 500 more were injured when it was bombed. The British delegation issued a draft statement expressing regret. Regret. They could not even bring themselves to condemn it. When we told them that was not strong enough, they were very happy to abandon the whole thing. Almost 1,000 people killed or injured, and all they have is regret. How about that for standards? Many of us will have to ask forgiveness for sins in Syria, in Iraq and many other situations that we are acquainted with.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt): I speak on behalf of the co-penholders on the humanitarian situation in Syria, namely, Spain, New Zealand and Egypt, and I will deliver my statement in English instead of my national language.

We are deeply concerned by the continuing deterioration of the humanitarian situation throughout Syria, and in Aleppo in particular, which includes attacks on hospitals, doctors and first responders, as well as on civilian infrastructure. The Security Council has a responsibility to ensure full compliance of any military operations with international humanitarian law, as well as under the provisions of resolution 2286 (2016). We also regret the fact that, despite many endeavours to address the situation, differences between major stakeholders are preventing the Council from guaranteeing the protection of Syrian civilians. Nevertheless, we hoped that there could have been a minimum of understanding to provide a basis for our work, assuming that good could prevail.

As co-penholders, we feel that it is of the utmost importance to shoulder our responsibilities towards the Syrian people as part of a neutral humanitarian approach. We have a collective responsibility to respond to the crisis. Our past failures may constitute an explanation as to why we have not been able to agree on a solution. However, such failure cannot justify a lack of action in the coming days. Therefore we—Spain, New Zealand and Egypt—urge all Council members to set aside their political differences and continue to work on the issue in order to implement the following.

A ceasefire should be established in Aleppo, first and foremost to allow full humanitarian access to the city, as well as an opportunity for sound proposals to be implemented. The duration of the ceasefire should be guided by the assessment of the United Nations on the basis of the actual humanitarian needs on the ground. It would also provide an opportunity to consider steps towards the implementation of Mr. De Mistura's proposals, namely a separation between terrorist organizations and moderate opposition groups, which, as far as we understand, is being studied in Switzerland.

The ceasefire must be observed by all parties. Previous experience has proved that unilateral efforts are not enough. All members of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) should do their utmost

to work with all parties on the ground in that regard. A ceasefire must be fully coordinated with the United Nations in order to ensure that the United Nations and implementing partners can to deliver aid and carry out medical evacuations.

A cessation of hostilities pursuant to resolution 2268 (2016) must be immediately and fully implemented throughout Syria. Aleppo would come under the cessation of hostilities regime at the end of the duration of the ceasefire.

Finally, there has to be adequate and robust monitoring of a ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities within existing mechanisms set forth by resolution 2268 (2016) and the ISSG.

Egypt, New Zealand and Spain will work with members of the Council and do our utmost to reach an agreement on those elements. We would like to end our remarks with a tribute to all the humanitarian workers who risk their lives daily for the sake of the Syrian people

The President (*spoke in Russian*): The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Given the pressure that you are under to defend the indefensible, Sir, your fantasy world has spread from Syria to Yemen. I just wanted to set the record straight and say that the United Kingdom did circulate a draft Security Council statement on Yemen, but its content was to strongly condemned the attack on the funeral. There was only one Security Council delegation that did not wish to support the statement, and that country was Russia.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a further statement in my national capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

I thought my colleague's memory was a little better than that. Was three paragraphs all that the event deserved? This is in fact the second version produced in the wake of our comments. But in any case, it was not a serious effort. We can talk about that another time. I hope, finally, that we can use the same format to talk about what is going on in Yemen and Iraq, in a useful discussion. Look, here we have Uruguay, setting a courageous example, always speaking first in public meetings. Let us discuss things. On 31 October, Mr. Ismael Ahmed will be here and we can talk about what is going on in Yemen in a public meeting.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall delay beginning my statement so that certain hypocrites can exit the Chamber. The exit of the representatives of certain States who have shed crocodile tears over the humanitarian situation in Aleppo reveals their hypocrisy and mendacity. They have put on this theatrical show on several occasions, but their behaviour confirms our suspicions of their complete lack of objectivity in their national policies towards my country.

I was compelled to request the floor after I listened to the misguided statements made by a number of Security Council members and the representative of the Secretariat, seeking as usual to distort the strenuous efforts of the Syrian Government to provide necessary services and support to those in need, and to vilify the efforts of my country's Government against organized terrorism being supported by the same States that deny my Government's constitutional and legal rights under international law to defend its people against terrorism represented by the organizations of Da'esh and Jabhat al-Nusra and associated terrorist, who are relics of ignorant times and Wahabi in nature.

As a Government, we will not allow any discussion about something called western Aleppo and eastern Aleppo. We will not allow for a repetition of the sad old scenario in which we used to talk about eastern Beirut and western Beirut. There is one Aleppo and there is one Syria. No one who plots against our country and our territories will achieve anything with us. The blockade is imposed on all of Syria, not just on eastern Aleppo or on Aleppo per se. An unjust blockade is imposed on the entirety of my nation. We have reiterated this thousands of times and shall say it again and again, whether anyone understands or not, and whether anyone refuses to understand or not.

Some States that feigned tears today over Aleppo in a theatrical fashion, as they have done before over the towns of Darayya and the neighbourhood of Al-Waer and other areas, have deliberately ignored the following facts.

First, the representatives of these States ignored the geopolitical landscape of the region, which reflects

the violation of the most basic norms of international law by certain States, such as Turkey, which dreams of restoring its Ottoman glory — which faded and will not return — and repeatedly violates the sovereignty of Syria and Iraq. Another example is Saudi Arabia, which supports terrorism in the region and throughout the world in the name of a religion that is innocent of such claims, including by issuing Wahabi jihadi fatwas legitimizing the bloodshed of Libyans, Yemenis and others.

Similarly, the United States, Britain and France have invaded and destroyed Libya, and before that the United States and Britain invaded and destroyed Iraq and killed millions of its people. The same goes for Qatar, which uses its oil funds to supply terrorists with all sorts of lethal weapons, and Israel, which is forming an alliance with Jabhat al-Nusra in the occupied Syrian Golan area. None of this has bothered Mr. O'Brien, Mr. Ladsous, Mr. Feltman or the Secretary-General. None of these violations of international law have angered anyone at all. It is just business as usual.

Secondly, the representatives who have just exited the Chamber, shirking their responsibilities, have ignored the main reason for the painful deterioration of the situation in Syria in general, and in Aleppo in particular, and how Aleppo has been turned from the economic capital of Syria, whose residents enjoyed a decent standard of living with all services, into a city whose residents suffer in terms of security, health, education and livelihood. What happened in this martyr city is to be blamed on the acts committed by terrorist armed groups and foreign terrorist combatants brought from all over the world — from New Zealand to Canada — into Syria through Turkish territories, facilitated by the Erdogan regime and with funding from the Saudi and Qatari regimes.

As for the Governments of the United States, France, Britain and other States, they ensured them a supply of lethal weapons of all kinds. I bring with me images of the new weapons, including American-made rockets that have been sent to the moderate opposition in eastern Aleppo. These moderate terrorists, who have been genetically modified, are preparing to attack western Aleppo. This is an image of one of the rockets that have been dropped on a Church in western Aleppo; we have thousands of images for anyone who wants to see more.

Thirdly, the representatives who exited the Chamber, shirking their responsibilities to maintain international peace and security, have also ignored the fact that terrorists in eastern Aleppo are using civilians as human shields, as do Da'esh terrorists against the innocent residents of Mosul in Iraq. The terrorists in Mosul are the same as those in eastern Aleppo. They continue to shower the neighbourhoods of western Aleppo with dozens of bombs on a daily basis, claiming thousands of martyrs and wounded, and are met with a dubious international silence, especially from the States whose representatives have left the Chamber. It is deplorable that these States continue to call these terrorists the "moderate arned opposition", in a stark provocation to the provisions of the international law.

Fourthly, the representatives who have left the Chamber, shirking their responsibilities to maintain international peace and security, ignored the reason why the United States-Russia agreement on Aleppo of 9 September did not stand. The Syrian Arab Republic Government committed to the cessation of hostilities, which was exploited by terrorist armed groups to regroup and summon fighters and military equipment from the States that generously shed crocodile tears over the suffering of our people in Aleppo in order to confront the Syrian Government. These States disregarded the fact that armed terrorist groups are responsible for undermining and violating the agreement by rejecting it in the first place. Immediately after the signing of the agreement, 27 terrorist factions declared that they would not honour it — this did not reach the ears of Mr. O'Brien — and were targeting the humanitarian convoy in Oram Al-Kubra.

These States also ignore the fact that the main reason for the collapse of the agreement was the failure of the United States to commit to separating the so-called moderate opposition from the terrorist organizations and its targeting of a military site of the Syrian army in Deir ez-Zor on 17 September. The incident of 17 September allowed the Da'esh terrorists to consolidate their control over 300,000 civilians in Deir ez-Zor.

Fifthly, the representatives who have left the Chamber, shirking their responsibilities to maintain international peace and security, have ignored the agreement reached in the context of the coordinated Syrian-Russian effort for the cessation of hostilities in eastern Aleppo, unilaterally for humanitarian reasons, including the evacuation of the wounded, sick and elderly from eastern Aleppo and the facilitation

of access to a team from the United Nations entities working in Damascus, led by the United Nations Resident Coordinator and the International Red Cross and the Arab Syrian Red Crescent, in order to follow up the evacuation operation and set up six humanitarian corridors to allow civilians to exit, and two checkpoints for armed militants, who were invited to normalize their situation so as to be granted amnesty or to leave the city. However, the terrorist groups that were using the population as human shields undermined that operation. Eight corridors were opened, six for humanitarian exit and two for the armed groups' exit, contrary to what has been said by the American and British representatives.

Sixthly, the representatives who left the Chamber, shirking their responsibilities to maintain international peace and security, avoided identifying the persons responsible for the suffering of the population of Aleppo due to the lack of water, medicine, food and electricity, in particular given the fact that the terrorists cut off the water and power supplies to the city. The water plant is controlled by the terrorists in Aleppo. Everyone should pay attention to this detail. They are the ones who cut off the water supply and who loot food and medicine supplies intended for civilians in Aleppo. They are also responsible, along with the air strikes by the so-called international coalition, for the destruction of the power station in the Suleiman Al-Halabi neighbourhood and elsewhere, as well as other electricity and desalination plants. Therefore, it is the terrorists and the international coalition who are cutting off water and electricity supplies to the residents of Aleppo.

My Government rejects the selective approach of these States concerning the situation in eastern Aleppo and other specific areas in Syria. All of Syria, including Aleppo and the eastern, western, northern and southern areas, suffer from Wahabi terrorism, supported by the regimes of well-known Governments — Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and Israel foremost among them. It also suffers from the attacks of the allies of these States as part of the so-called international coalition, and from the American unilateral and arbitrary sanctions.

My country's Government reiterates its firm position that the only solution to the crisis is political solution based on an inter-Syrian dialogue, under Syrian leadership, without foreign intervention and without preconditions, be they American, British, French or other. My Government affirms that the political track must go hand in hand with the counter-terrorism track, which will continue unabated until all terrorist armed groups active in Syria have been eliminated. In that context, my Government reiterates the importance of the mission of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

How can some of the delegations in this Chamber, representing countries that sponsor terrorism, claim to be fighting terrorism while parroting misleading lies about ongoing military operations carried out by the Syrian Army in Syria and the Russian ally? How can they fight terrorism if they depend on terrorists as sources of information? Is there a relationship between those Governments and the terrorists?

To conclude, the battle for the liberation of Mosul and all territories in Iraq is the battle of the Syrian Government and its army, too. It is an absolute right of the Iraqi Government to liberate Mosul from terrorism, just as it is the right of the Syrian Government to liberate Aleppo from that same terrorism. Iraq and Syria are fighting the same terrorism in Mosul and in Aleppo. The resemblance between the two ongoing military operations in Aleppo and those in Mosul is significant. Why is there support for the military operation in Iraq, while the military operation in Aleppo faces obstruction? Why are humanitarian corridors being opened in order to push Da'esh terrorists out of Mosul towards the Syrian town of Raqqa? And why are those groups leaving Mosul for Raqqa being bombed by the so-called coalition bombers? Why reject the Russian-Syrian proposal to open the same corridors to allow the same terrorists to leave eastern Aleppo? It is as if the States supporting these terrorist groups were saying that the terrorists in Syria are angels, while the same terrorists in other places are devils.

I would have liked to ask the United States representative why her Government did not open a humanitarian corridor for the terrorist who attacked the night club in Florida. Why was he not supplied with food and medicine so that he could continue his terrorist activities, for humanitarian purposes known to Mr. O'Brien? Why were the terrorists who attacked the Bataclan theatre in Paris not supplied by the French Government with food and humanitarian aid and offered a humanitarian corridor to leave Paris for humanitarian reasons as well, known to Mr. O'Biren? The same applies to Britain and elsewhere. I say to those before me: enough hypocrisy. My country's people are the ones paying the price. This theatrical farce must end. All members of the Council must fulfil their responsibility to maintain international peace and

security, rather than settle scores between one another to the detriment of our people in Syria.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to Mr. O'Brien to respond to the questions and comments made.

Mr. O'Brien: I thank you, Sir, for the opportunity to speak again. As an international civil servant acting impartially, I do not retract, qualify or disclaim any fact or part of my earlier statement, which, I can assure you and each and every member of the Council, that I and my team and the wider United Nations have put together with great care, seriousness and professionalism.

I am prompted to state the age-old truth: Do not shoot the messenger. Rather, I urge the Council to stand up for the beleaguered people of Syria and to seize the opportunity that I described of taking leadership and those steps that are available to the Council and which they can take to stop the violence now, to stop the war now.

The United Nations continues its work undeterred. It remains ready to work with all parties to deliver humanitarian assistance, protect civilians and reach people in need. While humanitarians have a particular role, rest assured that we will work as one United Nations, including our support for Staffan de Mistura and his work.

I conclude by simply paying an undiluted tribute and saluting again the brave, undeterred, faithful humanitarian workers in Syria working tirelessly for the people of Syria, who are caught up in this terrible endless crisis and need life support and protection.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I believe that, as President of the Council, I can express the certainty that United Nations humanitarian personnel will continue their difficult work in Syria, as Mr. O'Brien said.

In my national capacity, however, I cannot fail to note that it is clear from Mr. O'Brien's response that he has no information supporting the contention that Russian and Syrian forces have been bombing over the past seven days, just as he has no information that chemical weapons have been used in eastern Aleppo at any point in time. I just want to point that out for the record.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I suggest that after the discussion we have just had there is no need to continue with consultations. We have had a briefing and consultations at the same time.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7796

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7796th meeting
Friday, 28 October 2016, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Churkin/Mr. Iliichev	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Senegal	Ms. Gaye
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Herasymenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security

Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Commonwealth of Independent States

Letter dated 14 October 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/867)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security

Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Commonwealth of Independent States

Letter dated 14 October 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2016/867)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Nikolai Bordyuzha, Secretary-General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization; Mr. Rashid Alimov, Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization; and Mr. Sergey Ivanov, Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/867, which contains a letter dated 14 October 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and I give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: I am pleased to be here today, and I thank the Russian presidency for having convened this debate.

Before turning to the subject at hand, I wish to say a few words about the latest developments regarding the International Criminal Court (ICC). The world has made enormous strides in building a global system of international criminal justice, with the International Criminal Court as its centrepiece. The ICC and other international tribunals have secured ground-breaking convictions. Yet we know that these and other gains have also been accompanied by setbacks and shortcomings. Prosecutions can take many years. Not all countries accept the ICC's jurisdiction, and even some of those that do, do not always support the Court fully.

Some are concerned that the Court has convicted only Africans, despite evidence of crimes in other parts of the world. Indeed, in recent days, three African countries have expressed their intent to withdraw from the Court. I regret these steps, which could send the wrong message on these countries' commitment to justice.

These challenges are best addressed not by diminishing support for the Court, but by strengthening it from within. Deterring future atrocities, delivering justice for victims and defending the rules of war across the globe are far too important priorities to risk a retreat from the age of accountability that we have worked so hard to build and solidify.

I welcome the Secretaries-General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

The global peace and security landscape has become much more complex in the last decade. Brutal wars raging across the Middle East and beyond continue to take lives, displace millions and wreck economies. Hospitals, schools and aid convoys are targeted with absolute disregard for international law and basic humanity. The resurgence of ethnic and sectarian tensions in the midst of these conflicts risks trapping nations in chaos for many years to come.

I am especially alarmed at the fact that a wide variety of armed actors are taking advantage of modern technology and globalization to wreak havoc on a horrific scale. Meanwhile, growing xenophobic, nativist and protectionist policies and sentiments in other parts of the world are cause for serious concern. These challenges transcend national borders and demand a collective response by the international community.

To rise to the moment, the United Nations has completed a number of major reviews of our work. All emphasized the urgent need to prioritize conflict prevention in a collective manner that draws on regional and global partnerships. This has always been one of my top priorities. After nearly 10 years as Secretary-General, I am even more convinced that the international community must come together to promote stability and defuse tensions wherever they occur.

In this context, and in line with Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, we are seeking to intensify our interactions with the heads of regional and subregional organizations. I have personally engaged in collaborating with our regional partners for results. The impact has been meaningful, but we can do even more.

Central Asia is the region where we have our closest contact with the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States. These organizations regularly exchange information with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia on terrorism, violent extremism, drug trafficking and other issues of shared interest and concern.

My Special Representative for Central Asia and Head of the United Nations Regional Centre, Mr. Petko Draganov, regularly meets with the organizations' leaders to discuss our joint agenda and the latest developments. All three organizations actively participate in supporting the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia.

The United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate are in direct contact with counterparts in all three organizations. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) cooperates with all three organizations on drug trafficking, irregular migration and counter-terrorism. They have conducted joint operational initiatives in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Experts from the three organizations participate regularly in UNODC meetings, including the Paris Pact Initiative, a partnership to combat illicit trafficking in opiates from Afghanistan.

On peacekeeping, I am especially grateful that senior officials from the Collective Security Treaty Organization participated in the first-ever United Nations Chiefs of Police Summit in June to discuss how we can more effectively tackle challenges together. Our organizations also work to strengthen confidence-building measures and promote stability in Afghanistan through the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. The United Nations is committed to strengthening this productive partnership.

We all agree on the value of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, and we should not be afraid to confront the difficulties. We have much in common, but our strategies may at times pull us in different directions. Resources, capabilities and mandates vary. Sometimes regional organizations may have particular challenges that can limit their role as honest brokers.

That is why it is so important to deepen our strategic dialogue, forge common approaches to emerging crises and strive to improve our collective responses to peace and security threats. In that way, we can make the most of our respective strengths.

Let us use this valuable Security Council meeting to advance our partnerships for the sake of the peoples of these regions and our world.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Bordyuzha.

Mr. Bordyuzha (*spoke in Russian*): I should like at the outset to thank the Russian delegation for having convened today's meeting on such an important issue as cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security. We also thank Mr. Ban Ki-moon for his statement.

The year 2017 will be marked for us by two anniversaries: the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing, in Tashkent on 15 May 1992, of the Collective Security Treaty, and the fifteenth anniversary since the establishment, on the basis of that Treaty, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). In that time, the CSTO has created a comprehensive legal basis regulating the work of the organization in all areas of its work, establishing the necessary political, diplomatic, military, and human rights, and special resources for ensuring the individual and collective security of member States and counteracting traditional and new threats.

In developing existing concepts of collective security, in Yerevan in October we held a meeting of

the Council at which it adopted the CSTO collective security strategy for 2025. One important area of our work is coordinating with senior political officials of member States and cooperating with other international and regional organizations. We are extending our working contacts with such international organizations as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and other major international structures.

We are strengthening CSTO forces. We now have a joint CSTO force that, beyond bilateral and regional groups, includes collective forces for rapid response, a collective CSTO air force, a rapid-deployment force for Central Asia and CSTO peacekeeping forces. We have established and are improving our military-technical and military-economic cooperation mechanisms with member States.

In the area of response to security threats, the efforts of CSTO members are focused on counteracting international terrorism and extremism, illegal drug trafficking, illegal migration, trafficking in persons, and crime on the Internet. The effectiveness of these CSTO special operations — including the Kanal anti-narcotics programme, the anti-illegal migration programme Nyelegal, the anti-cybercrime programme Proxy and the Nayomnik programme, aimed at preventing CSTO fighters from entering conflict zones — has been recognized for its effectiveness.

Of particular importance in this year's work of the CSTO is counteracting international terrorism. We are extending our cooperation with national anti-terrorist services. We are establishing a legal framework for a common security space for member States and undertaking joint efforts to adopt a plan to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In a recent meeting of the CSTO Council, a mechanism — unique among international organizations — was adopted for drawing up a single list of terrorist and extremist organizations in the CSTO format. In counter-terrorism, we are endowed with a collective CSTO response force that is undergoing extensive training to develop special forces. At our initiative, in addition to cooperation with specialized agencies of the United Nations, we coordinate with anti-terrorist structures of OSCE, CIS and SCO.

As a result of the migration crisis in Europe, we have adopted collective measures to enhance our fight against illegal immigration. We have begun to monitor migration flows from areas of armed conflict, mobilize resources and train joint forces to work with internally displaced persons. To increase the effectiveness of our measures to counter crime on the Internet, for the past three years we have had a consultaive coordination centre to respond to cybercrime. As a follow-up to the mechanism, our Heads of State have resolved to create a CSTO crisis-response centre. We also intend to establish a CTSO centre to coordinate with the United Nations crisis response.

I note in particular that in all areas of our work, CSTO works closely with United Nations structures. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon gave an especially important boost to cooperation between the organizations when he paid a visit to CSTO headquarters in 2011 and spoke to representatives of CSTO member States. Relations with this important international Organization are high-priority and constructive, as set out in the memorandum of cooperation between the CSTO and United Nations secretariats and the recurring General Assembly resolution on cooperation between the two organizations. It is also enshrined in the observer status enjoyed by CSTO in the General Assembly. When we met with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Moscow and New York, we discussed the need to enhance cooperation between CSTO and the United Nations, and we hope for similarly intensive and constructive dialogue with the Secretary-General designate, Mr. Guterres.

We have always enjoyed high-level working contacts among senior officials of the two organizations and their participation in United Nations-CSTO events. The CSTO secretariat works on such important areas as counteracting international terrorism and extremism, illegal drug trafficking and illegal immigration, peacekeeping and a number of other areas related to international security. We have had particularly intensive cooperation with the United Nations, including Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, to resolve the situation in Afghanistan and assess the situation in Central Asia. We have signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, which includes information exchanges and regular high-level contacts to assess our anti-terrorism efforts.

We are implementing a memorandum of cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and exchanging analyses and information on the drug situation in the region under CSTO responsibility. CSTO experts will participate in the UNODC Podmena operation in Central Asia, aimed at preventing precursors from reaching Afghanistan. Representatives of UNODC take part in CSTO operations. The information and teaching materials prepared by the United Nations are used to train the staff of counter-narcotics organizations of member States.

We are also developing cooperation with regional structures of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, whose representatives regularly work with CSTO coordination structures. We hold regular meetings with the leadership of the Regional Office for the Caucasus, Central Asia and Ukraine and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and regularly exchange information on emergency situations. We have agreed a protocol between the CSTO secretariat, the regional office of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and regional representations of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent in Russia.

We traditionally enjoy high-level cooperation between CSTO and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. We hold video-teleconferences and regular exchanges of information on crises situations, and coordinate joint activities. The Centre's leadership takes part in many meetings with CSTO Ministers for Foreign Affairs. We enjoy cooperation with the Monitoring Team of the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida,and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

On the basis of memorandum of 28 May 2010, our cooperation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has intensified. With the Department's methodological assistance, we train CSTO peacekeepers and work is under way to establish a permanent police stand-by force to deploy to peacekeeping operations, including those under Security Council mandate. We are completing the establishment of the legal basis to regulate the work of the CSTO joint peacekeepers, and preparing a road map up to 2025 that, following agreement with the United Nations Secretariat, will facilitate the establishment of preconditions for using CSTO peacekeeping potential for United Nations peacekeeping.

In conclusion, I wish once again to express our readiness to cooperate closely with the United Nations and to make proposals that we believe would facilitate and strengthen cooperation between CSTO and the Organization, with an emphasis on practical components.

First, we wish to pursue the practice of holding high-level regional meetings, under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General, to exchange information related to international security.

Secondly, we hope to coordinate joint efforts and a mechanism for international cooperation based on the potential of existing organizations, and to hold meetings between the CSTO secretariat, the SCO regional antiterrorist structure, the CIS anti-terrorist centre, the Department of Transnational Threats and Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee, which would promote closer interaction in thisarea.

Thirdly, we would like to see UNODC's cooperation with regional and international security organizations focusing on strengthening their coordination of joint activity aimed at combating illegal drug trafficking and creating an effective system for the rehabilitation and re-socialization of drug addicts. We would also like to see the leadership of UNODC hold frequent meetings with senior officials of the regional and international structures that specialize in issues related to combating illegal drug trafficking.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Bordyuzha for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Alimov.

Mr. Alimov (*spoke in Russian*): I would first like to thank the Russian presidency of the Security Council for taking this important initiative and for inviting the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to take part in today's debate in the Security Council, a forum that has so much bearing on the fate of the international community.

This year, SCO is celebrating its fifteenth anniversary. During that time, the founding member States of SCO have tested and successfully put into practice a model of intergovernmental cooperation based on the principles of the spirit of Shanghai, whose

key elements are equality, mutual respect, mutually beneficial cooperation and joint development.SCO member States proceed from the assumption that the United Nations remains the leading universal international organization for the maintenance of global security and affirm their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to strengthening its central coordinating role in international affairs.

The relationship between SCO and the United Nations has been actively evolving since 2004, as they have significantly strengthened it until it has become an example of effective cooperation between a global, universal organization and a regional one. That cooperation focuses particularly on complementing United Nations and Security Council efforts in the maintenance of international peace and security. SCO's main priorities include ensuring regional security and stability, fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism, and combating illegal drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. Within our organization, we have developed a package of international regulations that now include 31 documents on issues relating to cooperation in the areas of policy and security and constitute the legal basis essential to effective cooperation in that very important field.

SCO supports coordinating the fight against the threat of terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations. We are involved in the continued expansion of cooperation with the United Nations in taking joint action aimed at implementing the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In this regard, the activities of SCO regional anti-terrorist structure are particularly important. It forms the base for a successfully tested mechanism for effective multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation, as well as regular interaction and information exchanges with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

Between 2011 and 2015, the relevant authorities of SCO member States, through the coordinating role of the SCO regional anti-terrorist structure, prevented 20 terrorist attacks at the preparatory stage and about 650 terrorist and extremist crimes; eliminated 440 terrorist training bases and about 1,700 members of international terrorist organizations; detained more than 2,700 members of illegal armed groups and their accomplices and persons suspected of criminal activity; and extradited 213 people involved in activities of terrorist and extremist organizations, with many of them being sentenced to long prison terms. Much work has been done to curb illicit trafficking in arms and explosives and to counter the use of Internet networks for terrorist, separatist and extremist purposes. SCO's regional anti-terrorist structure has also developed and implemented joint measures to detect channels used to transport people to regions with heightened terrorist activity in order to enable them to fight for international terrorist organizations in internal armed conflicts, and has created a list of terrorist, separatist and extremist organizations. The structure intends to explore opportunities for practical cooperation with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre.

Achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan as soon as possible is an important factor in maintaining and strengthening security in the entire region. The Tashkent Declaration, adopted on 24 June by the Heads of SCO member States, emphasizes our involvement in and support for settling the intra-Afghan conflict by promoting an inclusive national reconciliation process under Afghan leadership and conducted by Afghans themselves, with the United Nations playing a central coordinating role. We consider a key SCO policy to be ramping up its efforts in the area of combating the illicit drug production and trafficking out of Afghanistan that poses a threat to international peace and stability, as outlined in Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. Implementing the SCO 2011-2016 anti-narcotic strategy and programme of action continues to be particularly important in that regard.

Thanks to the operations of the national drug control authorities, as well as improved cooperation between the relevant SCO member State authorities, in the period from 2010 to 2015 alone we seized about 25 tons of heroin, more than 11 tons of raw opium and more than 352 tons of marijuana. Operation Myshelovka, conducted in 2015, enabled us to seize more than 75 tons of precursors. We are currently conducting a joint effort to develop a strategy for combating the drug threat over the next five years. In that connection, we consider continuing and strengthening the close cooperation between SCO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to be particularly important.

We note the very productive dialogue between SCO and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. Considering the recent breakthrough decisions by the Security Council and General Assembly on peacebuilding and sustainable peace, there are good prospects for expanding SCO contact with the United Nations system, including the

United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

SCO is working consistently and purposefully to develop and expand cooperation in the humanitarian aspects of regional security. SCO member States' commitment to the spirit of Shanghai, the most important principle of its activities, is enabling us to construct a productive intercultural, interreligious and inter-civilization dialogue based on the parties' mutual trust, respect and equality. We intend to continue to further develop our policy of multifaceted cooperation with the United Nations and the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Alimov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ivanov.

Mr. Ivanov (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the invitation to take part in today's debate on the issue of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. We are greatly honoured by the number of regional organizations represented here and for the opportunity to address and inform the Security Council. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the United Nations have been cooperating since 24 March 1994, when the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/237, granting it observer status. Over the 25 years of its existence, the CIS has moved into the mainstream of global processes and has contributed to the development of a broad political dialogue founded on equality. With time, the Commonwealth has become a launching pad for creating and developing new integrative institutions in the post-Soviet space, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Eurasian Economic Community.

A major event this year was the meeting in September in Bishkek of the Council of CIS Heads of State. It is worth noting four of the declarations adopted at the Summit, of which the first concerned the Commonwealth's twenty-fifth anniversary, assessed its activity and discussed the importance of improving, developing and promoting it. Other declarations adopted included one on the outcomes of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, one on future joint efforts to counter international terrorism and one on the seventieth anniversary of the Nuremberg trials. The declarations were to be circulated at the United Nations, which I heard today has been done.

The CIS is not a bystander with regard to current world problems. In order to address them effectively, we have established and continue to develop contacts with the working bodies of the main international organizations dealing with key issues on the global agenda. The CIS Executive Committee maintains relationships, including those based on agreements, with such United Nations bodies as the Secretariat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Office at Geneva, the secretariat of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Our established practice of regular consultations between CIS Foreign Ministers on current international issues is very important in that regard.

The potential of the CIS for constructive action has been recognized as an important element in broad international cooperation, as reflected in resolution 69/10, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Commonwealth of Independent States, adopted on 11 November 2014 by the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. This year we intend to adopt a new version of that document at the seventy-first session, under agenda item 126. In that connection, I would like to point out that CIS representatives are regular participants in many efforts organized in alignment with the United Nations, such as the Tashkent international conference on the outcomes of the creation of the Central Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, held on 12 June 2015, and a regional seminar held in Ashgabat in March 2015 on border security and management in countering terrorism. At the end of this month, CIS representatives will take part in an international conference in Minsk on laying the foundations for the UNECE region's economic integration and sustainable development by 2030, as well as the Global Sustainable Transport Conference, to be held on 26 and 27 November in Ashgabat.

I should also mention the regional workshop held in Minsk from 15 to 17 January 2013 on implementing resolution 1540 (2004), organized by the Executive Director of the CIS in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the secretariat of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which was attended by

representatives from every CIS member State. Lasting and productive partnerships have been established between the CIS Executive Committee and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. CIS representatives regularly attend events organized by the Centre, and the Executive Director of the CIS holds annual meetings with the Head of the Regional Centre.

The CIS maintains active contact with specialized United Nations agencies of the United Nations through its cooperative sector bodies. For example, the CIS member States' Anti-Terrorism Centre maintains contacts with the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), under the Security Council, and with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Anti-Terrorism Centre experts regularly participate in CTC missions verifying CIS member States' compliance with resolutions 1373 (2001) and 1624 (2005). At the request of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the Centre prepares information for the global survey of the implementation of resolution 1624 (2005). The CIS intergovernmental statistics committee actively cooperates with the Food and Agriculture Organization in implementing the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the CIS region. Our Intergovernmental Council on Industrial Security maintains close contact with the secretariat of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. Representatives of the Commission's secretariat regularly participate in Council meetings, an in September 2016, the Convention secretariat was accorded observer status on the Council. Cooperation with United Nations institutions is a priority for the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly.

On the economic front, we are cooperating with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and we are preparing to sign a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The Inter-Parliamentary Assembly pursues regular contacts with UNESCO to promote its members' further adherence to UNESCO conventions. We conduct joint humanitarian actions and implement projects, while UNESCO experts take part in the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly's standard-setting activities. Our departments have established cooperation with such entities and divisions of the United Nations as the United Nations Population Fund, UNESCO, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNCTAD, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Meteorological Organization, the World Health Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization and others.

CIS member States participate in all United Nations activities. Economic cooperation is our priority, but now issues related to cooperation on security are also taking centre stage, thanks to the increasing threats in the area of international security. We can see that today's world is being constantly overwhelmed with new challenges. New sources of tension are added to old conflicts, and serious crises permanently endanger not just individual countries but entire regions. The threats and challenges posed by terrorist groups demand that we ramp up our collective counter-measures, including through regional organizations. The CIS believes that our united efforts will produce the greatest effects if we steadily and consistently strengthen the central coordinating role of the United Nations and develop the potential of its specialized institutions and global programmes. The CIS member States affirm their commitment to effectively implementing their obligations undertaken through relevant United Nations decisions, as well as their intention to fully support the United Nations in implementing and improving its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Needless to say, we are concerned about the serious risks in the immediate vicinity of CIS external borders, specifically the continued tensions in the Afghan-Pakistan region, which of course are a direct threat to the security of the Central Asian States that are members of the CIS. As a result of external interference, the export of so-called colour revolutions and of artificial regime change, once-stable countries have been plunged into chaos and anarchy. Instead of the promised democracy and prosperity, most of the citizens of these countries are suffering horribly and have been obliged to flee. Even Europe is now being tested by floods of migrants and the significantly worsening threat of terrorism.

At the same time, the information space of the CIS countries has been aggressively attacked by some States that are trying to use their dominant position in the global information network to achieve political and military goals as well as economic ones. In such circumstances, the Commonwealth countries affirm

their determination to expand international cooperation and unite efforts to increase the effectiveness of regional and international security systems.

After 25 years of joint integration and development, and despite the sovereign differences and particularities of each country, the Commonwealth remains a well-established and active party to all of the most important international instruments that regulate cooperation in the areas of security, disarmament and combating today's threats and challenges, and makes a genuine contribution to their implementation. Those joint measures are being undertaken with due account of the leading role of the United Nations and the need for constructive partnership with other international institutions and their specialized bodies.

Therefore, in the light of all this, we can conclude that the CIS countries have done a great deal of work to counter new threats and challenges. We have every reason to believe that the Commonwealth has made a considerable contribution to the joint efforts to ensure international security at the regional and global levels. At the same time, the dynamically changing international situation, as well as the ongoing growth and transformation of various factors posing a real or potential threat to our States, require further strengthened efforts to deepen and expand the comprehensive cooperation of the CIS with the agencies of the United Nations and other international organizations in order to effectively counter existing and new emerging threats and challenges to global security.

The development of collective approaches necessary for effective cooperation in overcoming modern threats and challenges requires increased cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, we believe that it would be appropriate to resume the practice of holding conferences and high-level meetings between the United Nationsm, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, which had been held annually since 1993 on a rotational basis and included the heads of other regional organizations. Such meetings would provide an opportunity to the heads of operational and executive bodies of those organizations to engage in a high-level discussion on the most pressing issues of the global agenda and elaborate common approaches to address them.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Ivanov for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China commends the Russian presidency for its initiative in convening today's meeting. I wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; the Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Mr. Alimov; the Secretary-General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Mr. Bordyuzha; and the Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Mr. Ivanov, for their respective briefings.

At present, the international situation is complex and undergoing profound changes. Regional hotspot issues have surfaced one after the other. Traditional and non-traditional security threats are interwoven. As the core of the international collective security mechanism, the Security Council bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international security. Cooperation in the areas of peace and security carried out between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, in line with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, is conducive to further strengthening the international collective security mechanism and better maintaining international peace and security. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations should abide by the following principles.

First, it is necessary to adhere to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It is necessary to encourage and support regional and subregional organizations in peacefully resolving their regional hotspot issues through dialogue, consultation, good offices and mediation. It is necessary to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the countries concerned.

Secondly, it is necessary to adopt a collective, holistic, collaborative and sustainable concept of security. It is necessary to take into account the historical background and current circumstances of the issues concerned, adopt a moderate approach and take holistic measures to seek and promote security through cooperation and the realization of mutual benefits and common security, which represent a win-win situation.

Thirdly, it is necessary to take into account the focuses and priorities of regional and subregional organizations and to clarify the orientation of cooperation, strengthen coordination and form synergy.

Fourthly, it is necessary to fully exploit the unique advantages of regional and subregional organizations with respect to geography, history and culture. Furthermore, it is necessary to establish means of cooperation so as to build a relationship of global partnership based on dialogue instead of confrontation and partnership instead of alliance. In recent years, SCO, CSTO and CIS have achieved positive results in fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, and promoting economic trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges. They have thereby played an able part in maintaining regional peace, stability and development. China expresses its appreciation in that connection.

The year 2016 marks the fifteenth anniversary of SCO. Since its founding in 2001, SCO has kept abreast with the trends of the time and has advocated the practice of the Shanghai Spirit, which is embodied by mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diverse civilizations and seeking common progress. It has achieved remarkable results. Members of SCO have signed the long-term Treaty of Good Neighbourship, which has provided mutual support to the paths of development chosen by each member and has chosen to seek mutual trust and common development.

SCO has adopted a policy of openness and expanded relations beyond its purview. It has established a relationship of cooperation with the United Nations, CIS and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. It has thereby set a good example for regional and international cooperation, which should be efficient, open and mutually beneficial. The Shanghai spirit has vitality and values that transcend geography and time. It has provided a useful lesson to all those who seek to establish good-neighbourly relationships and common prosperity. It has also injected vitality into the establishment of a new international order of relationships based on cooperation and achieving win-win solutions.

As an important member of SCO, China consistently supports SCO efforts to play a positive role in maintaining regional peace and security and seeking common development. China has actively implemented SCO development strategies until 2025 and adopted measures to make sure that the One Belt, One Road initiative became SCO development strategy. China has carried out measures to comprehensively promote cooperation in all areas. In June, Chinese President Xi Jinping attended the sixteenth meeting of the Council of Heads of State, where he proposed that SCO make security and the maintenance of regional peace and security its first priority. China has called for accelerated negotiations on the SCO anti-extremism convention, and announced a series of practical measures in support of deepening cooperation within the SCO. Together with other leaders of SCO, China published the Tashkent Declaration, which coincided with the fifteenth anniversary of SCO and made a great contribution in that connection.

China, together with other countries, is ready to carry the Shanghai spirit forward and move ahead with the continued cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations and work together to establish a new order of international relations built on cooperation and mutual benefit. China hopes to forge a community with a shared future so as to work together to achieve durable peace and security and prosperity — a world we all aspire to.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Let me first express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the heads of the organizations present for their respective briefings.

In today's world, no nation can maintain its peace and security in isolation. Therefore, it is critically important to deepen cooperation between the United Nations and regional security frameworks, in addition to encouraging collaboration between allies and like-minded countries. The key is to build trust and confidence among nations and regional organizations.

We have been briefed by the three organizations represented here today on measures for maintaining peace and security in Europe and in neighbouring regions. The founding declarations on the charters of these organizations enunciate their adherence to the objectives and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Hence, activities by these organizations must be conducive to building mutual trust and confidence, not only among their members, but also with countries from outside that region.

Japan has deep bonds with Central Asian countries that are members of the aforementioned organizations. Our goal is to bolster inclusive, stable and independent

development, while also contributing to regional and international peace and stability. In addition to a wide spectrum of bilateral cooperation, Japan has held Central Asia plus Japan dialogues to address regional challenges, such as anti-drug measures and border control. We have also promoted practical cooperation in areas ranging from agriculture to transport and distribution.

In addition, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is a significant and more inclusive platform for building mutual trust and confidence in the region and sharing knowledge through assistance to institution-building. It has a very broad European membership that extends beyond major parties to the three organizations present in the Chamber and includes Mongolia. Japan believes the OSCE is an important channel through which we contribute to security issues in and outside Europe and Central Asia.

Japan is proud to be the OSCE's oldest partner. Since 1992, we have deepened dialogue and cooperation and have contributed both funding and personnel to the Organization. Japan has sent monitoring missions to a number of elections in the region and has been the biggest donor to the OSCE's capacity-building project for border control officials. We are pleased to play a bridging role between Asia and Europe, including through active participation in Asia Contact Group's group meetings. We look forward to further cooperation with the OSCE in this regard.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of building mutual trust and confidence in maintaining peace and stability in the region and the international community as a whole. Japan strongly hopes that United Nations Member States and organizations in the Chamber today will redouble their efforts to that end.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate and the Secretary-General for his briefing. We fully share his concern about the situation of the International Criminal Court. I would like to thank our briefers, Mr. Nikolai Bordyuzha, Mr. Rashid Alimov and Mr. Sergey Ivanov, for their statements and for the activities of their respective organizations.

The report of the Secretary-General on the state of cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations (S/2016/621) identifies some progress in this area, including those linked to the maintenance of international peace and security, humanitarian assistance and development. The international situation has undergone profound and swift changes that require coordinated responses by the international community. The increase in transnational threats, terrorism and the spread of violent extremism, technological advances in war, cyberweapons and organized crime, among other factors, pose serious dangers and challenges to civilians and demand greater efforts at all levels.

I come from a region with a long tradition of regional and subregional organizations, from the Organization of American States and the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was established by the Tlatelolco Treaty, as well as more recent organizations, such as the Union of South American Nations and the Caribbean Community, both of which made important contributions to the peace process that is taking place today in Colombia.

We acknowledge that there is broad potential for cooperation and complementarity between the efforts of the United Nations and those of regional and subregional organizations. In this framework, regional and subregional organizations devoted to the maintenance of peace and security are particularly important and share responsibilities with the Security Council with regard to international peace and security. Given the knowledge that these organizations have of the history, culture and geographical proximity, they bring a specific added value when it comes to prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

With respect to cooperation between the United Nations system and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the report of the Secretary-General mentions progress, including the periodic consultation mechanism between the CSTO and the United Nations on issues of mutual interest in the area of global and regional peace and security and on the consideration of more information with respect to prevention, early warning and peacekeeping; the consultations between the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Collective Security Treaty Organization; cooperation with the Regional Office for the Caucasus, Central Asia and Ukraine of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and the exchange of information between the Executive

Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the head of the Commonwealth of Independent States Anti-Terrorism Centre, which seek to control the threat of foreign terrorist fighters in that region. Lastly, the willingness of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to cooperate with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre is another example of this progress.

Allow me to close my statement by welcoming the decision of the Secretary-General to further strengthen cooperation with regional organizations through stronger partnerships in formulating specific approaches to cooperation depending on the context and taking fully into account the particularities and requirements of every region, as well as the mandate of the institution concerned.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): The Angolan delegation commends the Russian presidency of the Security Council for convening this debate on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. We thank the Secretary-General for his insightful opening remarks and welcome and thank Mr. Nikolai Bordyuzha, Mr. Rashid Alimov and Mr. Sergey Ivanov for their presentations and for sharing their views with the Security Council on the relevant activities undertaken by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which have become relevant actors in the maintenance of regional peace and security and important partners of the United Nations.

Experience demonstrates that cooperation with regional and subregional organizations strengthens the United Nations efforts in the prevention of conflicts in the maintenance of peace and in restoring stability in post-conflict situations in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, which provides the framework for the establishment of regional and global partnerships in matters related to international peace and security. The involvement of regional and subregional organizations offers invaluable competitive advantages in complementing the work of the United Nations bringing to bear, as they do, specific knowledge of regional conditions, a better understanding of the genesis of conflicts and their prevention and resolution in the maintenance of peace and in upholding the rule of law.

The United Nations, on the other hand, brings to bear its universal membership and legitimacy, broad experience and operational capacity in the maintenance of international peace and security. This relationship is even more virtuous since it facilitates swifter responses to crisis situations and permits a longer-term combined engagement in resolving critical situations.

The current security challenges require a strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, which no country or organization can undertake by itself. In Eurasia and Central Asia, that cooperation has been of significant importance in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as well as in countering international challenges that are real threats to the livelihoods of the people of these regions and to peace and security. We greatly value the involvement of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States in countering threats to peace and security, including terrorism, illegal flows of small arms and light weapons, cyberterrorism, illegal migration, drug trafficking and organized crime, and in addressing the issue of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the Far East.

We warmly welcome developments regarding the commitment for enhanced cooperation between the CSTO and United Nations specialized bodies, in particular the Counter-Terrorism Committee, at a time when terrorism has become a real threat to Central Asia; the cooperation of the United Nations on the issue of drugs and crime, which is a living curse on the region; and the development of the peacekeeping capabilities of United Nations peace operations.

We acknowledge the support of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to the United Nations aimed at restoring peace in Afghanistan, and the current cooperation in preventing and resolving conflicts, in the fight against terrorism and non-proliferation of weapons, in countering transnational crime and illegal drugs, and in the exchange of security intelligence. We also appreciate the cooperation in methods of security between the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States and other international organizations, especially the United Nations.

We note that the CIS is party to all of the most important international instruments related to cooperation in the field of security, disarmament and countering terrorism; the intense relations that the CIS maintains with the United Nations and its specialized

agencies; the work of the CIS countries in countering new threats; and their considerable contribution to joint efforts to ensure regional and international peace and security.

As the concept paper (S/2016/867, annex) for this debate states, the strengthening and deepening of interaction between the United Nations and CSTO, SCO and CIS, on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, is a constructive element in the promotion of United Nations goals. Through a functional partnership, the United Nations and these organizations can strengthen the international community's efforts in facing contemporary challenges and in building capacities to address current threats with a comprehensive and long-term perspective, as a key factor in sustaining peace and attaining greater stability in an ever-more dangerous and challenging world.

We conclude by encouraging CSTO, SCO and CIS to use their influence, and their members to pursue cooperation among themselves, with the United Nations and other international and regional partners in collective efforts to find lasting solutions to global threats and challenges that affect the international community — such as terrorism, drug trafficking, international organized crime, the non-proliferation of weapons, despicable violations of human rights, and the aggressive behaviour of many international actors, including non-State actors — and to build a more just and peaceful world based on a community of shared interests.

Mr. González de Linares (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement and Mr. Bordyuzha, Mr. Alimov and Mr. Ivanov for their briefings. I am also grateful to the Russian presidency for having organized a debate of such relavance, given both the strategic importance of the Central Asia region and the growing cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

Regional organizations are generally equipped with mechanisms that are well-adapted to local realities in terms of preventive diplomacy and, as appropriate, peacekeeping. That is why their cooperation with the United Nations harbours promising potential. In the case of a few regional organizations, such cooperation has developed to achieve a notable level of maturity, which is the case of the European Union, the African Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which have become the subjects of specific meetings for the Security Council.

Conversely, in the case of other younger regional organizations, cooperation with the United Nations is less structured, as the concept paper (S/2016/867, annex) circulated by Russia for this debate clearly indicates is the case of the organizations we are discussing today: the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Those three organizations are the subject of a biennial resolution of the General Assembly, and have for years been promoting the development of their cooperation with the United Nations with a view to better complying with the objectives of the Organization, which is the ultimate guarantor of intentional peace and security. That cooperation encompasses a growing number of aspects, including the fight against drug trafficking, organized crime, terrorism, violent radicalism and other aspects that have been mentioned throughout the debate.

The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia is very active on all of those fronts, and we believe that the Centre has a particularly prominent role to play in promoting cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations present in Central Asia. The duties of that body of the United Nations system are specifically focused on the region in question, and we believe that it is already playing its role in a most satisfactory manner.

The European Union cooperates intensively with countries of the region and with the Centre itself, especially in matters related to border management and the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism — in the latter case, within the framework of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. As a member of the European Union, Spain greatly values the work of the Centre. We believe that preventive diplomacy must be one of our highest priorities, and we therefore welcome the ongoing cooperation between the Centre and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States. That relationship has a particularly important potential in early warning, conflict prevention and the fight against radicalism and violent extremism.

Mr. Moustafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We thank and welcome the three briefers to our meeting this morning. We also thank the Russian presidency for its

initiative to convene this meeting in order to strengthen the objectives of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations and coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations, on the one hand, and the various United Nations agencies, on the other.

Egypt believes in the noble mission of regional and subregional organizations in connection with the maintenance of international peace and security as mentioned in the concept paper (S/2016/867, annex) distributed by the President. The current challenges pertaining to peace and security require meaningful coordination between the United Nations and the various groups and organizations, in particular those that deal with the maintenance of peace and security. In that regard, Egypt is a member of several regional and subregional organizations through which it contributes to the maintenance of peace and security, regional stability and the promotion of good neighbourly relations and mutual trust between the various parties.

Egypt is striving to strengthen is relations with different parts of the world, including Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Far East. Egypt is also an observer to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization because our country is closely following its activities and working towards exchanging information and experience at all levels, including in the economic, strategic and military areas, among others. We are pleased with the work carried out by that organization, especially with regard to combating terrorism, drug trafficking and other cross-border criminal activities, such as illegal arms trafficking, in particular small arms and light weapons. Such weapons must not wind up in the hands of armed terrorist groups. In that vein, we welcome the efforts made by the organization to restore peace in Afghanistan.

My country also supports the role played by the Collective Security Treaty Organization in connection with combating terrorism, drug trafficking and cross-border organized crime. We are also a member of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001), concerning counter-terrorism, and want to strengthen cooperation with the Committee and that organization. It is important to benefit from sharing the experiences and opinions of the Committee so that we can strengthen the efforts of the United Nations in those two areas. We also believe that there is potential for future cooperation in connection with training for peacekeeping operations and peacekeeping efforts in Asia or Europe.

As for the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Egypt maintains programmes and initiatives aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and sustainable development in different areas, including in the humanitarian and civilian areas, trade, development, direct investment, the free movement of persons, migration and modern technology and its uses. In that context, the role played by the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States is one of complementarity at the regional level, and one that also strengthens peacekeeping and security promoted by the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Lastly, we stress the importance of dialogue and cooperation between the United Nations and these regional and subregional organizations in Europe and Asia. We recommend that the Council and the Secretariat communicate directly and regularly with these organizations through the convening of debates, consultations, technical consultations and annual consultations between the Secretariat and the secretariats of the regional organizations.

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): My delegation joins other Security Council members in thanking the Russian Federation for convening this debate. Enhancing cooperation between the Council and regional and subregional organizations in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations is indeed a relevant and worthwhile objective. I believe that our discussions today will contribute to that end.

In that connection, I thank His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for providing an overview on the state of cooperation between the United Nations, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). I also thank Mr. Nikolai Bordyuzha, Secretary-General of the CSTO, Mr. Rashid Alimov, Secretary-General of the SCO, and Mr. Sergey Ivanov, Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of the CIS, for their respective briefings and insights on this topic. I also take this opportunity to commend the work undertaken by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Petko Draganov and the entire team at the Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia since its inception in 2008.

States members of the CSTO, the SCO and the CIS collectively encompass a massive swath of land, stretching from the borders of Eastern Europe to the Far East and, as of last year, to South Asia. From the political, economic or development standpoints alone, the dividends that could be reaped from a stable and prosperous region covered by these organizations are immeasurable. The significant changes to the international environment in recent years, with new and increasingly complex challenges to international peace security, all demand more robust, and even proactive, responses, especially at the regional level.

Given the intricate linkages between political, security, economic and development factors, which necessitate both comprehensive and targeted approaches, regional organizations have a critical role to play by bringing to bear the collective weight of their membership on regional-level issues or situations. Traditional crisis responses based solely on narrow conceptions of security may no longer be sufficient or sustainable. We note that, since their establishment, each of these organizations has developed a niche area of expertise intended to better contribute to the needs of the populations in their respective regions. In that regard, we urge the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia to continue to support these organizations to the extent possible.

Efforts to enhance cooperation between the United Nations and the CSTO, the SCO and the CIS by deepening collaboration with agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and bodies of the Security Council should be supported, as they have yielded noteworthy success in areas such as combating trafficking in illicit drugs and terrorism in the Eurasian and Central Asian regions. In that regard, my delegation supports the draft resolutions expected to be adopted during the current session of the General Assembly aimed at further strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and these organizations. They are important steps towards consolidating the gains achieved thus far and providing fresh impetus in exploring new avenues for cooperation.

At the same time, for these organizations to realize their full potential in addressing the myriad challenges faced at the regional level, differences must be cast aside. We should work together to further enhance the effectiveness and integrity of those regional structures, while members should be encouraged to deploy their respective comparative advantages and unique local expertise for the benefit of the region.

The increasingly complex and intertwined challenges that threaten our world today cannot be addressed by any country alone or by the United Nations itself. Those challenges can be effectively addressed only by our collective and coordinated efforts through the establishment of strong and regionally owned frameworks for conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. We hope that the discussions today will generate more ideas and strategies to foster, expand and enhance comprehensive cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations with a view to strengthening our collective capacity to respond effectively to threats to international peace and security.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I too thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General Bordyuzha, Secretary-General Alimov and Vice-Chair Ivanov for their briefings.

New Zealand strongly supports active and regular cooperation between the Security Council and regional and subregional organizations in preventing and resolving conflict. The past 70 years have provided numerous demonstrations of the value of regional organizations and of their effectiveness as partners with the United Nations. The peace and stability currently enjoyed in much of Latin America, Europe and South-East Asia owe a great deal to the regional architecture that has been put in place there. In Africa, we have also seen welcome growth in the tempo and effectiveness of regional and subregional cooperation to address peace and security challenges over the past 20 years. That has also been the experience in my own region, the Pacific, where regional cooperation has been essential for meeting both security and sustainable development challenges for the past 40 years.

The reasons for that are clear. Regional organizations are able to draw on local knowledge and perspectives that are essential for addressing the security challenges faced by their members. They provide a mechanism for mobilizing and sustaining the political will of their members behind conflict prevention and resolution efforts. They also provide a means for regions to interact with the United Nations and to leverage the capabilities that the global organization can bring to the table.

As today's briefers have made clear, the peace and security challenges facing Central Asian

countries cannot be met effectively without close cooperation among the countries of the region and strong partnerships with the international community. Ongoing tensions among Central Asian countries stemming from disputed borders, the management of cross-border resources, such as water, and the region's complex ethnic makeup will require sustained and patient management, as will increases in the cross-border flow of peoples, including refugees.

As we are all so aware in the Council, Afghanistan has been involved in a succession of external and internal conflicts for many decades. Despite the immense investments of the international community following the Council-endorsed action to free the country from the grip of Al-Qaida and the Taliban after the events of 9/11, peace and stability remain almost as elusive as ever there. Enduring instability will further exacerbate tensions, with cross-border implications for the wider region.

As was again underlined to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) yesterday in the briefing by the Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Taliban-controlled narcotics trade remains a serious threat to the stability of Afghanistan and its neighbours. We encourage regional players to continue coordinated efforts, including cooperation with United Nations bodies such as the 1988 Committee. It is Central Asia that will benefit most from a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

Regional cooperation is clearly also essential for combating transnational criminal networks, including drug traffickers and the transborder flow of illicit money and arms. Effective cross-border cooperation will be vital for addressing terrorism and violent extremism, the threat of which has been significantly exacerbated by the more than 2,000 foreign terrorist fighters thought to have travelled from Central Asia to battlefields in Iraq and Syria.

As the Permanent Representative of Malaysia said, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia can play an important part in facilitating international support for tackling those threats. The Centre's support in facilitating dialogue, promoting cooperation on early warning and analysis, and helping to mobilize and coordinate the political will and resources necessary to take effective action should be greatly valued.

History also teaches us that countries that trade together are less likely to take up arms against each other. Levels of intraregional trade in Central Asia remain very low. Increasing connectivity through economic linkages, the strengthening of cultural ties and greater mobility can be the building blocks for stronger diplomatic bonds. In the Asia-Pacific, for example, we have seen the growth of trade go hand-in-hand with closer regional cooperation led by regional organizations. Promoting greater regional economic integration could both enhance Central Asia's prosperity and help maintain peace and stability over the longer term.

There is obviously no one-size-fits-all approach to cooperation with regional organizations, but it is clear that it is in all our interests to encourage effective regional cooperation and to help regional and subregional organizations fulfil their potential.

Before I conclude, I want to note an important positive development in another regional organization devoted to maintaining international peace and security, namely, the Antarctic Treaty System, which is of vital importance to my country and other members of the Organization. Earlier today in Hobarh, Australia, the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Living Resources agreed to establish the world's largest marine protected area. That was the culmination of over six years of dedicated diplomatic effort led by New Zealand and the United States, and involving difficult and intense negotiations with other Commission members, including, I would note, members of the Council: Russia, China, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Ukraine and Uruguay.

As my Minister observed when welcoming that achievement, "This is a great result for quiet diplomacy and honest toil". He added that it was particularly pleasing that this agreement could be reached when there are so many difficulties and so many differences happening elsewhere. I have little doubt that he was thinking of the challenges we face in the Council and hoping that we might strive for similar positive results here.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the representatives of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States for their briefings on the actions carried out by their respective organizations.

The concept note prepared by the Russian presidency (S/2016/867, annex) invites us to focus on the issue of regional cooperation in the light of the challenges to international peace and security in Central Asia. First, Central Asia is a region that continues to face major economic and political challenges, as well as security challenges. In particular, the situation in Afghanistan and the various illicit forms of trafficking that flourish in the area — in drugs, weapons and human beings — are all destabilizing factors. The terrorist threat spares no one today and often thrives in the context of social frustration, among other factors, and it should not be neglected.

That fragile context makes cooperation crucial among all actors present in the region, including States and regional and international organizations. To complement the actions of regional organizations, the mission of the United Nations Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia is crucial. Support for the countries of the region in developing national responses to these challenges and encouraging them to strengthen regional cooperation is more needed than ever. I am thinking in particular about the assistance provided by the Centre to the implementation by the countries of Central Asia of the United Nations Global Counter-terrorism Strategy, whose tenth anniversary we are celebrating this year. That is an excellent example of value added.

France encourages any initiative that will allow countries in the region to contribute nationally, regionally and internationally to efforts to prevent violent extremism and to fight terrorism.

Lastly, beyond the action of regional and subregional organizations, the European Union has also played a crucial role in this region since the adoption by the European Council of the European Union Strategy for a New Partnership with Central Asia, in June 2007. The total amount of assistance provided by the European Union to the region for the period 2014-2020 amounts to over €1 billion.

With respect to security issues in particular, a high-level dialogue between the European Union and countries in Central Asia was held on 18 May in Brussels. Specific measures were adopted during the meeting, such as the provision of expertise to bolster the implementation of a common action plan for Central Asia within the framework of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, the development of programmes related to European Union border management and the fight against drug addiction and the renewal and updating of a European Union-Central Asia action plan to fight drugs. The ministerial meeting of December 2015 made it possible to reaffirm the commitment of European citizens to promote the rule of law, stability, security and cooperation in the area.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank the Russian Federation for convening today's debate on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security. We also welcome the briefings from Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Mr. Nikolai Bordyuzha, Mr. Rashid Alimov and Mr. Sergey Ivanov.

Our delegation places particular importance on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations, including the Security Council, and regional and subregional organizations. We firmly believe that the contributions of these organizations to the areas of peace and security reinforce the work of this multilateral institution in resolving conflicts, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

While the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security lies with the Security Council, the many conflicts and crises around the world call for close cooperation between all United Nations bodies and regional organizations, particularly in cases where such organizations have a closer perspective of regional and local conflicts and a knowledge of their underlying causes, which allows for close and mutually beneficial cooperation. We firmly believe that regional and subregional bodies, such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States, among others, play a fundamental role in promoting dialogue and cooperation with a view to addressing the challenges and threats to peace in those regions. There is therefore a need for those institutions to work in close cooperation with the United Nations as strategic allies in the areas of international and regional peace and security. The independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of countries are common goals of their members States.

Such institutions play an important role in the maintenance of peace in a very broad region that spans from Eastern Europe to the Far East. Despite all of

their efforts, political and economic stability in the region is currently affected by a number of challenges related to security threats, which include terrorism, violent extremism, radicalization, and recruitment of foreign terrorist fighters coming from the region and being recruited by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other groups, as well as ethnic and internal sociopolitical disputes that increase the risk of armed conflicts in the region. Tension and border disputes that are linked to delimitation problems are further negative factors.

The challenges facing Central Asia call for an effective and coordinated response from countries in the region, which must address the challenges and security threats that the strategic geographical zone is facing by establishing bilateral and regional cooperation links. We therefore appreciate the initiatives and the meetings that those organizations have organized with countries of the region and with other members of the international community to address the main challenges that they currently face. In that regard, we support the focused approach of those regional and subregional organizations to seek greater cooperation between the States of Central Asia in the areas of combating terrorism, preventing violent extremism and radicalization, with a view to implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which includes a number of activities aimed at improving capacity building and information exchange.

The improvement of the political situation in Afghanistan, particularly in the context of its transition and reconciliation process, will have a significant impact on the stability of its neighbours. Nevertheless, although there have been achievements in combating terrorism, violent extremism and drug trafficking, such problems still pose a threat to the country's stability. We therefore commend the efforts of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Collective Security Treaty Organization in their commitment to combat those scourges in coordination with Afghan authorities.

For the sake of the stability and security of the region, it is crucial that these issues be addressed by establishing conditions conducive to lasting solutions to regional problems, based on mutual benefits for States and the principles of international law. Diplomatic measures and mechanisms for prevention, both of the United Nations and of regional organizations, need to be coordinated and targeted towards an early identification of possible crises and an exchange of information. Venezuela commends the progress made by the United Nations to work with the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia, which seek to establish methods to prevent conflicts and create peacekeeping mechanisms.

In conclusion, we highlight the importance of continuing to encourage the efforts being made by those regional and subregional organizations to create specific areas of cooperation suited to each circumstance, taking into account the particular characteristics and interests of member States. We also encourage increased dialogue and contact between countries of the region, with the aim of identifying areas susceptible to disputes or conflicts, in order to take appropriate confidence-building measures to develop cooperation strategies that benefit all members States and the international community as a whole.

Mr. Harasymenko (Ukraine): I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his briefing. Indeed, it is very important to develop effective partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant statutes of regional organizations.

In his latest report (S/2016/621) to the Security Council on the cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations, the Secretary-General underscored that such cooperation had significantly grown and diversified in recent years, and had proved critical in ensuring effective international peace and security engagements. We fully agree with his conclusion and we welcome positive examples of such cooperation between the United Nations and the European Union, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and many others. Such organizations have proved to be capable of taking the lead in promoting peace, security and stability.

As a current non-permanent member of the Security Council, Ukraine has already commended their increased contribution to the maintenance of peace and security and has welcomed their continued and important efforts and enhanced peacekeeping role to prevent, mediate and settle conflicts. Still, cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations has yet to reach its full potential and

should be substantially mainstreamed, since the nature and structure of that cooperation are often overshadowed or undermined by the interests of certain Council members. Unfortunately, we must admit that, in today's world, the roles of regional organizations in maintaining peace and security are rather different. Some of them are committed to their charters and work to prevent, manage and resolve crises. Others, on the contrary, tend to abstain from such actions and politicize their activities because of the distractive actions of their members.

Since the topic of our discussion today is the cooperation between the United Nations and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), I would like to raise a couple of issues that are very important for creating a full picture of the nature, results and effects of that interaction.

First, let me remind the Council that, according to the CSTO and CIS Charters, respectively, their members should be "acting in strict compliance with their obligations" under the Charter of the United Nations and Security Council resolutions "being guided by the universally recognized principles of international law"; and "build their relations in accordance" with the principles of "the inviolability of State borders, the recognition of existing borders and the rejection of unlawful territorial annexations" and the "resolution of disputes by peaceful means".

However, the facts are very clear. These organizations demonstrated a complete lack of will to take appropriate measures to respond to the conflicts in the region. First of all, I refer to the Russian aggression in Ukraine and Georgia. The Russian Federation, one of the founding members of these organizations, continues to blatantly violate the Charter of the United Nations, the CIS and CSTO Charters, international law, as well as multilateral and bilateral agreements.

At this very moment, these organizations are still pretending that there is no ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, no occupation of Crimea, no de facto occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and no war crimes committed against the Ukrainian and Georgian peoples. I take this opportunity to call on the member States of these organizations to speak up collectively and individually and to make a difference. This is also about their security and their future. Their voices are important in our common efforts aimed at defending the Charter of the United Nations and the credibility of the cooperation of regional organizations with the United Nations.

Until then, unfortunately, we cannot agree that the CIS and the CSTO are able to "make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes", as enshrined in Article 52, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations. Until then, we do not see any added value in deepening interactions between these organizations and the United Nations on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In that regard, I would like to commend the SCO members that during the conflict in Georgia in 2008 underscored the need to respect the territorial integrity of States. We wish the same approach to be maintained vis-à-vis the temporary occupation of Crimea and the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore that the Russian aggression against Ukraine clearly demonstrated the insufficiency of mechanisms of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations. In our view, there is an urgent need to develop mechanisms of coordination for regional organizations with the United Nations at a stage when there are early signs of emergency. It would help us to shorten the time needed to start actions for the sake of the prevention and settlement of conflicts.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): First, I want to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his leadership in building strong partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations. I thank the Secretary-General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, Mr. Bordyuzha; the Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Mr. Alimov; and the Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Mr. Ivanov, for joining us here today.

Our discussion today is a timely one. The work of anticipating and effectively responding to armed conflict, transnational terrorism, refugee and migrant flows, cyberthreats, drug trafficking and organized crimes goes beyond the capacity of any one State. One way we can address those capacity gaps is through strong and coordinated action by the United Nations and regional organizations. Such cooperation has the potential to strengthen the responsiveness, agility and breadth of the international community's approach

to our many challenges. But in order to realize this potential, regional organizations must prioritize the interests of all of their members. They must respect international obligations and commitments and act in accordance with the decisions of the Security Council and the purposes and principles of the United Nations. Above all, States must maintain their sovereign right to make their own decisions, without coercion from other States — decisions about the organizations and alliances in which they choose to participate.

As we consider strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and specific regional organizations, it is imperative that we ensure that these shared principles and obligations are also respected and strengthened, not undermined or eroded. Strong and coordinated actions by the United Nations, regional organization and partner States have brought peace, prevented and mitigated conflict and helped coordinate reconstruction and development after conflicts have ended. Such actions have contributed to humanitarian response efforts, fought terrorism and cyberthreats and strengthened efforts to combat illegal trafficking and organized crime.

From the Balkans to the shipping routes off the Horn of Africa to Afghanistan, regional organizations are a force multiplier. Where these kinds of legitimate joint efforts between the United Nations and regional organizations are consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations and applicable conventions, covenants and treaties, they will find a strong supporter in the United States. But regional organizations are strongest when they reflect the goals and aspirations of all of their members, rather than the dominance of a few. When one or two States set the agenda and determine the positions of the entire group, they are no longer truly regional, and the diversity that they can bring to partnerships with the United Nations system is impaired. As with Russia's involvement in both Georgia and Ukraine, we have seen that the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Treaty Organization were unable to defend, or even advocate for, the principle of territorial integrity.

The organizations we endorse must also ensure that they respect international obligations and commitments, particularly with regard to counter-terrorism efforts. As we see across our agenda, States sometimes struggle to safeguard both security and individual liberty. Emergent security threats from terrorist organizations and from those advocating for violent extremism are real. And effectively countering the exploitation of porous borders and misuse of technologies like the Internet is not easy. In the rush to respond effectively, however, States and regional organizations must resist the temptation to criminalize the freedom of expression, limit the freedom of association or bar legitimate political opposition. We saw such overreach in the recently introduced draft resolution on countering extremist ideology and propaganda.

We are concerned that the counter-terrorism policies proposed by these regional organizations at times also excessively infringe upon individual liberties and political freedoms. Restrictions on the freedom of expression and on the activities of civil society, especially restrictions that target minority groups, inevitably backfire. Such restrictive policies are counter-productive to a State's ability to engage with communities that are the greatest terrorist recruitment targets. Such isolation and persecution can indeed foment grievances that are drivers of violent extremism.

The freedom of expression and the free flow of information are in fact reliable defenses against violence and conflict. A free and vigorous civil society is one of the most effective means to address radicalization and violent extremism online and offline. Civil society organizations are vital in developing and sharing credible counter-narratives that disrupt the radicalization process and counter violent extremism.

The United States record of promoting strong and increasing cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations around the world — including NATO, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the African Union, the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, among many others — is clear and unwavering. As we consider strengthening cooperation with additional regional organizations, it is imperative that we ask ourselves whether the activities of those organizations advance the purposes and principles of the United Nations, whether their decision-making represents the diversity of their States members and whether they exhibit the capacity to respond quickly and effectively to regional crises. Those are the standards that the United States expects from the regional organizations of which we are a member, and they are the standards that we should expect from them all.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I thank the Secretary-General and all our briefers for their remarks today. We welcome this chance to discuss the Central Asian region. It is a part of the world that we hear too rarely about in the Chamber, although the region faces many unique challenges that directly affect our core business, namely, international peace and security. They are challenges that represent the complex history and geography of the region. Unresolved border disputes and tension over access to water and other resources are having an impact on the security and prosperity of local communities. We therefore welcome the recent opportunities for discussions to improve relations between a number of countries in the region on those important issues.

Environmental issues are also a major regional challenge, many of them legacies of the region's history. And climate change is emerging as a major new risk factor. As a result, the region needs international support to improve its resource management, especially of water, and to adapt to the damage that has already been done. We are pleased to be participating in that.

In parts of the reion those challenges include strengthening respect for human rights and the rule of law, promoting sustainable development, tackling corruption and removing restrictive State controls on economic and political life. There have been some improvements on those issues, and that is welcome, but the speed and extent of progress is not what the people in the region would expect — or, indeed, deserve. The c hallenges are clear, and so too are the regional opportunities and potential. To help realize that potential, the region can look to regional organizations and to the United Nations.

Therefore, we strongly support cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations on the challenges facing Central Asia. For the United Kingdom, such cooperation must be consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations and all applicable conventions, covenants and treaties. And it must uphold United Nations principles, particularly respect for human rights and universal freedoms. There are a number of regional and subregional organizations that are already doing valuable work in Central Asia to help address those shared challenges. Let me share three examples.

First, as mentioned by Vice-Chair Ivanov, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) works on a wide range of security-related issues, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights and democratization and economic and environmental issues. The OSCE's capacity-building activities on preventing and countering radicalization and terrorism are particularly welcome, and they are delivered in a manner consistent with international and OSCE commitments on human rights. We also welcome the OSCE's work on women's empowerment, judicial and legislative reform, media development and conflict prevention, including in relation to the issue of water management, which I mentioned earlier.

As a second example, the Council of Europe is working positively with the region. The Council of Europe's neighbourhood policy programme with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan was designed to facilitate the political transition to democracy, help promote good governance and reinforce the regional work of the Council of Europe in combating cross-border and global threats.

My final example is the European Union (EU). The EU remains committed to a strong and durable relationship with the five Central Asian States and to reinforcing cooperation on security and stability, including the sustainable management of natural resources. The EU's approach emphasizes the fundamental importance of democratization, respect for human rights and the rule of law and socioeconomic development. The United Kingdom strongly supports the work of the EU, including that of its Special Representative for Central Asia, Mr. Peter Burian, in taking that forward.

I would like to conclude by thanking you, Mr. President, for holding this debate. It is well timed, just two and a half months ahead of Kazakhstan joining the Council. The Council will be richer for Kazakhstan's regional insight. We look forward to working closely together on this issue and many others next year.

Mrs. Gaye (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking President Churkin and the Russian delegation for convening this debate on cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. This morning's meeting addresses the interaction between the United Nations and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States, following up

our very interesting recent exchanges concerning cooperation with the African Union (see S/PV.7694) and the European Union (see S/PV.7705).

Allow me at first to welcome the briefers for their being here and to thank them for their outstanding presentations: Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Mr. Nikolai Bordyuzha, Secretary-General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization; Mr. Rashid Alimov, Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization ;and Mr. Sergey Ivanov, Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Today's meeting provides an opportunity to strengthen the basis for cooperation between the United Nations and the organizations I just mentioned, including within the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, which stipulates that regional and subregional organizations may cooperate in improving collective security through the maintenance of international peace and security.

As was rightly indicated by the Secretary-General in the Chamber in August 2015, "the United Nations increasingly shares responsibility for peace and security with regional organizations." (*S/PV.7505, p. 2*) Acting under mandate of the United Nations, regional organizations have provided local expertise and operational resources to the United Nations. For the many conflicts and crises around the world require especially close cooperation between the United Nations and its various partners, particularly regional organizations, which play an essential role in the maintenance of international peace and security in their respective areas of competence. Regional entities, which form a link between the national and global levels, benefit from geographic proximity with the conflict situations in their areas and are therefore in a better position to understand such situations.

It is clear that several of the missions of the entities with which we are exploring possible cooperation opportunities are in perfect alignment with the goals of the United Nations, such as, the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region, the fight against terrorism, the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the fight against transnational crime, human trafficking and illegal immigration and weapons and drug trafficking.

The geographic areas covered by the Collective Security Treaty Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States are faced with multifaceted threats to peace and security including terrorism, drugs trafficking and organized crime. The scope of such challenges requires resolute collective action and the pooling of efforts by the various stakeholders, which are a requirement for efficiency and effectiveness. In that regard, the United Nations, an organization tasked with maintaining international peace and security, should be able to benefit from pragmatic cooperation with regional organizations. In so doing, it would help to stem the wide array of threats and contain the potential causes of conflict. In that regard, my delegation would like to highlight the remarkable work conduced by the Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, which, through its proactive approach, anticipates the situations that could devolve into conflict, by promoting dialogue and the peaceful settlement of disputes as the key elements for achieving peace and sustainable development.

In conclusion, I would like to state that, now more than ever, my country is convinced about the usefulness of and the need for a fruitful partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations. I would also like to reaffirm Senegal's commitment to effective multilateralism that is focused on the United Nations, with the aim of finding lasting solutions to the critical challenge of attaining global peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank the Secretary-General for his statement on a subject that is so important to our region, and the leaders of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) for their detailed briefings.

Today's meeting is a central one for the Russian Federation's presidency of the Security Council for several reasons. First, the organizations under discussion are truly vital to the regions in which they operate. There are pressing security and other issues on their agendas, and one of Russia's foreign policy priorities is cooperating with them. Secondly, we believe that the considerable potential for cooperation between the United Nations and CSTO, SCO and CIS has not yet been fully exploited. Thirdly, we have often encountered situations in which members of the

international community are not fully informed about their activities. On the one hand, that is to some extent a positive sign, since it speaks to their self-sufficiency and effectiveness in resolving the challenges they face. On the other, that lack of information can lead to underestimating the role that CSTO, SCO and CIS play in maintaining peace and security in their regions, something to be avoided. In that regard, we hope that today's briefings and discussion will enable the international community to understand some of the basic problems that our region has and how CSTO, SCO and CIS are working to solve them.

Let me be frank. There is another problem. Under various pretexts, some of our partners, including some within the Security Council, have been attempting to artificially marginalize those organizations, seeing them as geopolitical competitors. For example, one of the statements made environment arlier today referred to certain criteria that such regional organizations should meet. It is quite clear that if such criteria were to be applied to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, for example, it would have to be rapidly disbanded. We should put an end to this kind of ideological approach, which damages our ability to cooperate in finding answers to regional and global challenges.

I will begin with the use of so-called tough security. The Collective Security Treaty Organization was created in order to respond to our most urgent military and political challenges, including the upsurge in terrorist and extremist groups, and its potential for destabilizing the situation on the borders of CSTO member States. However, it is important to emphasize that membership in CSTO is completely voluntary and our joint efforts are not aimed at just anyone. We are ready to engage in constructive cooperation with every member of the international community, and that approach is enshrined in the organization's documents.

Terrorist threats are one of CSTO's most difficult problems. The overall situation in the Central Asian republics remains calm, partly thanks to the major efforts of the leaders of those countries. However, both for us and for our CSTO partners, the threats to regional security that result from external factors are extremely immediate. We are dealing directly with terrorist attacks and the ideological grooming of some of our citizens, who then unfortunately end up in the ranks of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). And, needless to say, we are also concerned about their possible return to Russia or to our neighbours and partners.

We are equally concerned about the chronic instability in Afghanistan and the presence there of terrorist hotbeds. The tracks of Afghans are clearly visible in the subversive activities of organizations in Central Asia such as the Uzbekistan Islamic Movement and Hizb ut-Tahrir. The jihadists entering the region establish contacts with criminal elements and drug dealers and build cells for future terrorist activities. The problem is exacerbated because the so-called Islamic State has penetrated into Afghanistan and is expanding its platform there. In that regard, we have seen that ISIL has recently been increasingly involved in northern Afghanistan, and there is a growing threat from elements of the group entering neighbouring States. Drugs in Afghanistan present a serious problem. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime recently revealed horrendous data on a 43 per cent increase in opiate production there. Central Asia has every reason to talk about Afghan heroin aggression. Afghan drug trafficking is a significant source of funding for the extremist underground network in Central Asia.

If we are to end such threats, we must act decisively on the security front. The CSTO countries will continue to strengthen and enhance their cooperation with armed groups and security forces. The Kobalt-2016 joint rapid-response team training session held in May demonstrated the excellent potential of the special forces of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan for combating terrorism and drug trafficking. The practical expertise of CSTO is in demand, thanks to its more than 10 years of experience in handling the Kanal anti-drug operation Canal, aimed at cutting drug-smuggling routes. During that time, seizures of drug indicators have gone up tenfold, to 20 tons.

The United Nations and CSTO have a major mutual interest in enhancing their practical cooperation, particularly in areas such as peacekeeping and combating organized crime and terrorism. We believe it is important to continue working on developing CSTO peacekeeping capacity with the goal of sending contingents to United Nations peacekeeping missions in the near future.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has increased its membership and its regional scope. Over its 15-year history, it has strengthened its involvement

in regional processes. The process of making India and Pakistan full-fledged members is in its final stages. We hope that their soon-to-be participation in SCO will enrich its cooperation efforts.

Since 2005, Iran has participated in the work of the Organization as an observer. We hope that, once the issue of Iran's nuclear programme has been fully settled and the United Nations sanctions have been lifted, no obstacles to considering its application for full membership will remain.

Ensuring the security of the SCO area is the main focus of its work, and there are many challenges similar to those being faced by CSTO, such as terrorism, extremism, organized crime, drugs trafficking and threats from Afghanistan. We need to further enhance the capacity of regional anti-terrorist structures, improve coordination among military forces within the United Nations and other international organizations, update our anti-terrorist strategy and programme for its implementation, and improve the legal basis for cooperation in the area of information security.

We give priority to implementing the SCO cooperation programme on combating terrorism, separatism and extremism for the period 2016-2018. Work is under way on a draft SCO convention to combat extremism. The joint counter-terrorism efforts of the SCO Peace Mission military exercise has proven to be very productive. However, our cooperation with SCO is not limited just to that. In the Ufa SCO Development Strategy, which was established under Russia's presidency, we planned more than 70 events in the areas of politics, economics and culture. One important area of SCO work is fostering close economic cooperation. We must further eliminate trade barriers and limits to the movement of capital and labour, deepen production and technological cooperation, and develop production chains and joint transport infrastructure. The start of negotiations on association of the Eurasian Economic Union and the China Silk Road Economic Belt is a promising prospect in that regard. We are convinced that that involvement in this integration process by all SCO and CIS members will be a prologue to establishing a broad Eurasian area. We are pleased with the cooperation dynamics in the areas of tourism, education and youth.

In our relatively new geopolitical region, CIS is a veteran organization that has helped us to forge friendly relations between new sovereign States on the basis of trust, equal rights and respect for each other's interests. Despite well-known problems, the overall positive role played by CIS is obvious. The CIS Heads of State met for a summit in September in Bishkek, where they adopted an anniversary statement announcing a joint commitment to strengthening the Commonwealth, using its integration capacity and developing greater partnership among member States. We hope that this will give a political impulse to the development of trade and investment cooperation and stimulate cooperation in the areas of culture, education, science and sports. We believe that CIS can effectively promote the interests of the United Nations, including through the interconnected nature of security and development.

In conclusion, I wish to note that developing a collective approach in order to effectively overcome current threats and challenges requires consistent efforts to enhance the cooperation efforts of the United Nations with regional and subregional organizations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular Chapter VIII. The United Nations and regional organizations have to complement one another by exploiting their objective comparative advantages. CSTO, SCO and CIS are making a considerable contribution to combating terrorism, the drugs trade, organized crime and other threats to international peace and security. All three organizations are developing practical cooperation with the United Nations, including with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. We are convinced that today's meeting has helped to demonstrate the potential of and genuine interest in these regional organizations in enhancing mutually beneficial cooperation with the United Nations on a whole range of issues and different avenues of work.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Abdrakhmanov (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to deliver my statement on behalf of the States members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

I thank the Russian presidency for its important initiative to convene today's Security Council debate on cooperation with three important regional organizations: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the

Commonwealth of Independent States. Constant and close dialogue between the United Nations and the organizations of the vast Eurasian region is vital to us all. We support the development of effective and cooperative relations between the United Nations and CSO, which is an important global partner in efforts to ensure international peace and security.

This year, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization celebrates its fifteenth anniversary. Over the course of its existence — the twelve years during which it held observer status at the General Assembly — CSO secured a commendable place and a rank of authority among the influential, international and regional organizations. It has become an effective entity in maintaining security, stability and sustainable development in the modern system of international relations. While reflecting the fundamental principles and ideas of the Organization, the Shanghai spirit is a unique source of the successful activities conducted by SCO and an important guide in developing inter-State relations, countering global challenges and threats, and settling international disputes. It is based on mutual trust, equality, consultation, respect for the diversity of civilizations and cultures, and the aspiration to achieve development for all.

SCO strictly follows the approach of avoiding bloc-based, ideological and confrontational approaches to addressing urgent international and regional problems.

In strict adherence to the principles enshrined in the charter of SCO — including the fact that SCO is not directed against other States or international organizations — SCO member States are actively developing contacts and cooperating with other countries and international and regional organizations. Partnerships have been established and maintained with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and we are also engaging in cooperation efforts with other international and regional structures. On 21 November, the fifth anniversary General Assembly resolution 65/124 on cooperation between the United Nations and SCO will be adopted. The principle of openness in SCO is consistently implemented. Procedures are under way for admission of India and Pakistan as full members of SCO in mid-2017.

The rapidly changing global situation is marked by ever-increasing geopolitical tension and the growth of terrorism and violent extremism, all of which negatively affect the entire system of international relations. In such conditions, the United Nations remains the leading universal international organization for the maintenance of global security and the main platform for addressing inter-State and international issues. We reaffirm our commitment to strengthening the central coordinating role of the United Nations in international relations. The countries of SCO intend to continue to adhere to the universally recognized purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, primarily with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of cooperation among States, independence, equality, the independent choice of social systems and paths for development, mutual respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the non-use of force or threat of force.

We support the further strengthening of the lead role played by the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security by continuing extensive consultations in search of a package solution for its reform in order to improve the transparency and effectiveness of the Council, guided by the interest of ensuring the unity of the States Members of the United Nations, without setting artificial time lines and expediting options that do not enjoy broad support from Members States. We believe that all relevant disputes should be resolved peacefully through friendly negotiations and agreements among the parties concerned without internationalization or external interference. We are firmly convinced about the inadmissibility of ensuring our own security at the cost of the security of others. We support strict adherence to the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the comprehensive and consistent promotion of all of the goals and principles reflected therein.

We stress the importance of preventing the militarization of outer space so as to ensure equal and indivisible security for all and to maintain global stability. We express serious concern about the growing threat of terrorist groups gaining access to weapons of mass destruction, including terrorists' use of chemical and biological materials for terrorist purposes. We also call on the international community to work on creating a peaceful, secure, fair and open information space based on the principles of cooperation and respect for

national sovereignty and non-interference in States' internal affairs.

We believe firmly that all States Members of the United Nations should develop coherent political approaches to the fight against terrorism, establishing the cooperation between international and regional organizations that can help to create conditions conducive to expanded collaboration in combating terrorism in the context of our new realities. In that regard, we would like to affirm our solidarity with multilateral counter-terrorism efforts and our support for joint actions against terrorist groups, conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. We also support further close cooperation in combating the spread of terrorist ideology, particularly among young people and through the Internet, as well as in preventing ethnic, racial and religious intolerance and xenophobia.

We are concerned about the worsening international drug problem and in that regard we took special note of the outcome of the General Assembly's special session on the world drug problem, held in April in New York. In our view, it is vital that, with the United Nations playing a central coordinating role, we unite our efforts in an integrated and balanced approach based on the principle of States' common and shared responsibility for eradicating global drug production and on improved cooperation in the areas of drug rehabilitation and effective reduction of the demand for drugs.

We would like to emphasize that one of SCO's priorities in its cooperation with the United Nations is combating terrorism in all its forms, including the financing of terrorism, the illicit production and trafficking of drugs, transnational organized crime, crimes that exploit modern information and communication technologies, illegal migration and human trafficking, the illegal smuggling of arms, ammunition and explosives, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and strengthening border security.

Today's debate reflects the desire of all Member States to discuss the most pressing and multi-dimensional global issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security around the world. SCO countries are determined to participate actively in that dialogue in order to help ensure the synergy of the three pillars of the United Nations — peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. We intend to deepen our dialogue and cooperation with all of the international and regional organizations that we have official relations with, as well as to encourage relevant external contacts in order to expand our network of multilateral partnerships, in accordance with the initiative launched by SCO Heads of State at the Tashkent Summit in 2004.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belarus.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Today I have the honour to speak on behalf of the member States of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO): Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Belarus. We are grateful to the Security Council for taking this important initiative to hold a debate on United Nations cooperation with the three international organizations in Eurasia — CSTO, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). To underline the importance of continued and close dialogue between the United Nations and those organizations, we have only to recall that the countries we represent are home to half the world's population.

The member States of CSTO support the development of effective partnerships with the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. Both the General Assembly and the Security Council have emphasized the importance of such cooperation many times. Whether on the economic or security front, such collaboration between the various international and regional bodies represents a requirement of modern life and the conditions needed to ensure countries' and peoples' sustainable development and to provide a peaceful, safe environment for progress and prosperity.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization is a major partner of the international community in that regard. Since its beginnings, CSTO has transformed itself into a genuinely multifaceted body with a broad potential for responding to today's challenges and threats. I would like to emphasize that this is not just about ensuring our member States' national and collective security. CSTO's functions and aims include coordinating its member States' foreign policies, working together in order to strengthen our defensive capacity, improving our system for practical cooperation between our crisis response mechanism and national armed forces in order to ensure our States' security, and combating international terrorism, drug trafficking and illegal migration, as well as cooperating in areas

such as information security and the prevention and elimination of emergency situations. CSTO is ready to initiate multilateral cooperation mechanisms in all those areas, and in fact is already doing so in practice. In 2015, for instance, CSTO held an international conference on anti-drug operations, aimed at eradicating heroin distribution channels and synthetic drugs coming out of Afghanistan, attended by 25 countries as well as CSTO members, in an example of the joint efforts that affirm CSTO's practical contribution to enhancing regional and international security.

Productive cooperation with the United Nations is a priority for our States. That is solidly founded on CSTO's observer status in the General Assembly, and periodic Assembly resolutions reflect the mutually beneficial cooperation between the two organizations. Our two secretariats' cooperation is based on two framework documents, the 2010 Joint Declaration of Cooperation and the 2012 memorandum of understanding between the CSTO secretariat and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations.

CSTO member States are involved in enhancing cooperation with the United Nations based on the progress we have already made. We believe that cooperation on peacekeeping between CSTO and the United Nations is a promising direction that can benefit both of our organizations and the international community, and we have made it a priority. The CSTO agreement on peacekeeping activity and related training represents a legal basis for developing our peacekeeping capacity and putting it into practice. We will very soon be ready to submit proposals for joint action with the United Nations for a substantive discussion on the possible involvement of CSTO member States in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

We also propose considering other possible forms of cooperation between the United Nations and CSTO. There are many current topics that are of interest to both organizations and indeed the whole world, including the fight against terrorism, dealing with humanitarian emergencies and countering human trafficking and illegal migration. We would like to jointly consider how CSTO and the United Nations could combine their efforts to confront such challenges and threats, for example, by organizing specific measures with the leadership of both organizations participating.

It is symbolic that today's debate includes organizations that are engaged in a wide range of issues, from peace and security to economic, humanitarian and cultural cooperation, which we see as a reflection of the commitment of States Members of the United Nations to considering the world's most pressing problems as they react on each other. CSTO States are committed to participating actively in that process, in their firm belief in the inseparability of peace, security and gradual sustainable development.

I would now like to make a few comments in my national capacity regarding Belarus's cooperation with CIS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Belarus's natural path to development has always been through integration within CIS. For us, integration is a tool by which our countries' joint efforts can achieve our key goal — increasing our citizens' well-being and quality of life. This year CIS is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary, and during the years of its existence it has acted to resolve the many complex challenges related to the collapse of the Soviet Union, to encourage the establishment of sovereign independent States and to preserve and further develop our historical ties to one another.

Today one of our priorities in cooperating with CIS today is on the economic front. In our view, successful cooperation in areas such as energy, transport, trade, industry and the development of innovative technologies should be one of the Commonwealth's uniting functions. Our experience of cooperating within CIS has contributed significantly to our development of integration processes in various formats, including the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union. Mutual cooperation and the integration of these elements in the Eurasian space is very important for global political stability and well-being.

Since July 2015, Belarus has been an observer of the Shanghai Pact. For four years before that we had the status of Dialogue Partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. With Belarus' participation, the organization has been dealing with current threats, economic integration and cooperation the Eurasian Economic Union in establishing the Silk Road Economic Belt. We are ready to become a western portal for the SCO.

Over recent years we have seen considerable success in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as it has grown. The membership of India and Pakistan has significantly enhanced the authority of the organization and broadened its political and economic potential. The

national interest of Belarus lie in joining with the SCO in the fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism, which are areas where we can and must collaborate with the United Nations and other international and regional organizations if we are to achieve international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Lal (India): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's debate and for circulating the related comprehensive concept paper (S/2016/867, annex). We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his remarks on this important topic.

Regional and subregional organizations have an important role to play in maintaining international peace and security. Accordingly, the United Nations interacts with several regional organizations — for example, the African Union on the African continent — and India has supported such cooperation, pursuant to Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. Indeed, Article 54 of the Charter directs such organizations to keep the Security Council fully informed of their activities for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Today, few security problems begin and remain within the borders of one country; they invariably radiate beyond the national borders. Terrorism, drug trafficking, transnational crime, pandemics and environmental degradation do not respect any borders.

Terrorism constitutes a growing threat to international peace and security. The international community is increasingly confronted with terrorist groups that have influence across continents in terms of the sourcing of their finances, recruitment, the spread of their ideologies of hate and their areas of operation. This has been made possible by the forces of globalization over the last two decades. The battle against such groups can be won only collectively and through much closer international cooperation. Regional and subregional groups can play an important role in facilitating such cooperation.

Among the organizations being discussed today, India has been an observer in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for the past decade and is now an acceding State. India brings principles to the organization that are in tune with the philosophy of the SCO. India's capacities in trade, investments, information and communication technology, space, science and technology, agriculture, health care, and small and medium-sized industry can create far-reaching synergies with SCO countries.

The SCO is a young organization. With India as a full member, the boundaries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will stretch from the Pacific to Europe and from the Arctic to the Indian Ocean. It will represent 40 percent of humankind and over 1 billion young people.

There already exists a Joint Declaration on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This cooperation can be taken forward. For the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations to be effective, it needs to be one based on respect for regional processes, complementarity and a division of labour based on comparative advantage.

While acting under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, regional and subregional organizations should make every effort to assist their member States to achieve pacific settlement of disputes, in cooperation with the United Nations, as appropriate. Such cooperation should encompass all relevant issues related to international peace and security, including the fight against terrorism.

It is important that cooperation between the United Nations and the SCO and other regional bodies grow organically. Periodic debates like the today's offer a useful opportunity for the United Nations and regional organizations and their member States to discuss how such growth could proceed in a mutually supportive manner.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kyrgyzstan.

Ms. Moldoisaeva (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): This year, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) marks its twenty-fifth anniversary. The member States of the Commonwealth are committed to the values that are set out in the Charter of the United Nations. Cooperation within the CIS is based on respect for humane and humanitarian values, which provides the basis for combating the ideological extremism, intolerance and terrorism that threaten the stability not only of member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States but the world as a whole.

Since January 2016, the Kyrgyz Republic has held the presidency of the Commonwealth of Independent

States. In this period three entities have celebrated anniversaries: the Council of Heads of State of the CIS, the Council of Heads of Government and the Council of Foreign Ministers. At the Bishkek summit in September 2016, the Heads of State reviewed a broad range of issues related to intra-CIS cooperation, including security issues and combating international terrorism and extremism. The Heads of State adopted four statements — on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Commonwealth, on the seventieth anniversary of the completion of the work of the Nuremberg Tribunal, on future joint efforts to counteract international terrorism, and on the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem.

It should be pointed out that all of those problems were given particular attention in a context in which the international situation is undergoing complex changes and international security continues to be subject to various sources of instability, namely, international terrorism, religious extremism and other contemporary challenges and threats. We are especially concerned by the growth in various terrorist and extremist organizations and the continuing recruitment of CIS citizens into entities engaged in armed conflicts.

No less grave an external threat for the CIS continues to be the situation in Afghanistan, where there has been no drop in the threat of terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking. Reiterating that there is no military solution to the Afghan problem, the CIS States support the settlement of the intra-Afghan conflict through inclusive national reconciliation. We believe that these efforts should be undertaken by the Afghan people themselves and their designated leaders, without imposing preconditions and with the United Nations playing the central coordinating role in the process of international cooperation on Afghanistan.

As the CIS countries contribute to counteracting new threats and challenges to security, they take into account the leading role played by the United Nations and the need to develop constructive partnerships with other members of international organizations and specialized agencies, such as the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, INTERPOL, the International Organization for Migration, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Financial Action Task Force for combating money-laundering. CIS States are also parties to all the main international cooperation agreements on security, disarmament and counteracting contemporary threats and challenges, and we make a proper contribution to implementing them.

Our countries make regular submissions to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) of information on their efforts to improve national systems for monitoring the trade in weapons of mass destruction, the means for their delivery and related materials, providing the highest possible respect for standards of nuclear security and implementing the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. All CIS States are parties to the global initiative on combating acts of nuclear terrorism.

Significant experience has been gained in the areas of cooperation between the CIS and the United Nations in the achievement of our goals in the social, economic and humanitarian spheres. However, enhancing the cooperation's viability and effectiveness implies ensuring that there is a solid basis for such cooperation, which would help us strengthen the links between the CIS and the specialized agencies and offices of the United Nations. That would be facilitated by the General Assembly draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations Organization and the Commonwealth of Independent States, to be adopted in November.

In order to ensure the sustainable socioeconomic development of CIS countries, member States are working on enhancing and broadening economic cooperation. That includes establishing a fully fledged free trade zone for the Commonwealth, further upgrading transport and communications and increasing our humanitarian cooperation, important components for ensuring stability and security throughout the CIS area.

In conclusion, allow me to express our gratitude for the initiative to convene today's debate and our trust that cooperation between the United Nations and the CIS will continue to have a positive impact on the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Russian presidency for convening

this important event. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the briefers and their respective organizations.

The maintenance of international peace and security is currently much more challenging than ever before, and therefore requires a much more shared and collective response at the national, regional and international levels. That is why greater cooperation is now needed between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations that seek to maintain peace and security.

Regional organizations are better positioned to grasp the essence of the issues at hand in a realistic way and provide a better understanding of the facts on the ground. In many cases, they are also equipped with preventive mechanisms adapted to local realities and needs. They can act to defuse tension in emerging conflicts and seek peaceful political solutions.

To that end, the Security Council regularly holds meetings with regional organizations such as the African Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU) to discuss cooperation, but this is the first time that the Council holds such a debate on cooperations with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). These are relatively young emerging organizations and unions, operating in vast regions, from Eastern Europe to the Far East, with huge political influence in the world and significant contributions to strengthening regional and international security.

Counter-terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, peacekeeping and peacebuilding are some of the areas for potential interaction between the United Nations and CSTO, SCO and CIS.

The General Assembly, through its biennial resolutions, endorses cooperation between the United Nations and the CSTO, under agenda item 126, "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations". CSTO's structure allows it to actively contribute to international efforts by developing its own regional peacekeeping capacities or by helping national Governments with post-conflict development.

The Joint Declaration on Cooperation between the Secretariats of the United Nations and SCO, signed in 2010, has laid the foundation for active cooperation between the two organizations in various fields. The threat of Da'esh and its offshoots continues to be significant and widespread, turning parts of the region, such as Afghanistan, into hotbeds for terrorists and extremist groups, thus increasing the need for increased cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

As an organization that the Islamic Republic of Iran has already expressed interest in joining as a full member, the SCO actively supports efforts by the international community and the United Nations in fields such as the prevention and resolution of conflicts, the fight against terrorism — through SCO's regional counter-terrorism structure — the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, countering transnational crime and illegal drugs and providing international information security, among others. It also supports peace, development and stability in Afghanistan.

The CIS too has sought to facilitate cooperation and interaction among its member States and to advise them on security in the face of emerging challenges and threats in the region.

The United Nations should continue its efforts to foster coordination and interaction with such organizations on the basis of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, and those organizations should also try to harmonize their aims with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations such as the CSTO, the SCO and the IS can enhance interlinked, mutually reinforcing security and development. Achieving security, development and stability in such a macro-region as Eurasia will readily serve as the basis for economic growth and nation-building in this important and immense region.

We hope that the holding of this debate will further improve and deepen the cooperation between the United Nations and these organizations and help develop collective, innovative approaches to peace, development and stability in vulnerable parts of Eurasia that can also be applied to other parts of the globe.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): I would like to thank the Russian presidency for organizing today's open debate on such an important issue. We also appreciate the

thoughtful concept note shared by your delegation to inform the debate (S/2016/867, annex).

Our multipolar world is more free and vibrant, yet more chaotic and turbulent. New and complex conflicts are emerging, while older and unresolved disputes continue to fester. The international order established after the Second World War is falling apart. But a new order has yet to emerge. At a time when confrontation has returned between the major Powers, traditional challenges have not diminished in scope or intensity. Poverty remains widespread. Violations of human rights are rampant. Situations of foreign occupation persist. Violent extremism and terrorism have assumed dangerous new forms. The global refugee crisis, as we all know, has reached unprecedented levels.

We believe that one of the tragic ironies of our age is that we are witnessing unprecedented human suffering at a time when spectacular advances in human progress are being made possible by the technological and scientific breakthroughs of our era. The United Nations remains an indispensable organization for facilitating these opportunities and addressing the complex challenges of our times. But it faces an imposing task in simultaneously dealing with all those challenges and opportunities. Enhanced cooperation with regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations could help the United Nations succeed.

We agree with the observation in the concept note that the United Nations derives its legitimacy from its universal membership and comprehensive activities, while regional organizations, by their very nature, often have a better understanding of the situation on the ground. There is therefore great scope for cooperation between them. That is why Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations elaborates the role of regional arrangements in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Article 52 of the Charter not only urges Member States to

> "make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes through such regional arrangements or by such regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council",

it also urges the Security Council to "encourage the... pacific settlement oflocal disputes through such regional arrangements". The role and utility of regional organizations in the peaceful settlement of local disputes is therefore amply acknowledged and entrenched.

Operating in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, regional organizations play a positive role in addressing many diverse challenges, especially the economic and social dimensions of such challenges. Closer political interaction among regional countries can also serve to address the security dimensions of these challenges. However, as we know, cooperation among members is an essential factor for the success of regional arrangements. With relatively smaller memberships, regional arrangements can usually yield speedier and mutually productive cooperation.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) offers the promise of mutually beneficial regional cooperation. With its current membership and observers, the organization represents half the world's population. SCO plays a useful role in promoting cooperative and collective security in the Eurasian region, especially in countering terrorism, separatism and extremism, as well as in fighting drugs and crime. Since 2010, SCO has also been cooperating regularly with the United Nations in the fields of prevention and resolution of conflicts, anti-terrorism through its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, and countering transnational crime and illegal drugs.

In June, my country signed a memorandum with SCO, paving the way for our full membership of the organization. Pakistan hopes to benefit from this membership, as we firmly believe in the value of finding regional solutions to regional problems and conflicts. We call for enhanced dialogue and cooperation between the United Nations and SCO, as both organizations share the same purposes and principles.

While Pakistan is not a member of either the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) or the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), we believe that each regional organization is unique and for that reason offers different capabilities. In this regard, we see value in cooperation among various regional organizations as well. For example, with overlapping memberships, there could be enhanced cooperation among SCO, CSTO and CIS. SCO, for example, could also benefit from cooperation with other regional organizations such as the the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Economic Cooperation Organization.

The One Belt, One Road project, launched by President Xi Jinping of China, is a significant example of ways in which cross-regional cooperation can be promoted in an inclusive and practical way. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is a major component of that visionary and ambitious enterprise.

Finally, let me say that the United Nations provides the umbrella under which regional organizations can promote cooperation with each other in advancing the objectives of peace, stability and prosperity. The principles of the Charter of the United Nations remain the foundation on which nations of different regions can conduct their mutual relations and cooperation across regions in our interdependent world.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): Armenia expresses it appreciation to the Russian presidency of the Security Council for initiating this debate and for sharing a substantive concept paper (S/2016/867, annex). We thank the Secretary-General for his presence and for his briefing, and appreciate the presence of Mr. Nikolai Bordyuzha, Secretary-General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO); Mr. Rashid Alimov, Secretary-General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization; and Mr. Sergey Ivanov, Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

While we are aligned with the statement on behalf of the CSTO, we also wish to add a few points in our national capacity.

No country can be effective in pursuing its national agenda without engaging with others. That is particularly obvious in the case of countries with modest capacities. The regional and subregional levels of cooperation provide an effective platform for pursuing specific common objectives, including common security goals. The United Nations remains a critical forum for interregional engagement.

As a member of numerous regional organizations, CSTO and CIS among them, Armenia benefits strongly from the institutional strength and effectiveness of the regional and subregional landscape of cooperation, including in the fields of political dialogue, security, human rights, democratic transformation and the strengthening of the rule of law, trade and economy, culture and youth. As a member of CSTO, Armenia will continue to deliver on its commitment to forging stronger cooperation with the United Nations and to contributing to international peace and United Nations peacekeeping capacities. As a troop-contributing country for over 12 years, Armenia has gathered considerable national experience in its multiple engagements in peacekeeping operations in various parts of the world. Lately, Armenia has gained valuable experience in a United Nations-led operation in Lebanon.

Armenia has been investing its experience in strengthening its preparedness for peacekeeping within CSTO. In that context, we welcome the expanding cooperation of the United Nations with CSTO, including between their respective secretariats. During our presidency of CSTO over the past year, we have attached priority to the expansion of such cooperation between CSTO and the United Nations.

In our national context, the peaceful resolution of conflicts on the basis of the norms and principles of international law, without exception, are of specific significance given the ongoing negotiations for the peaceful settlement of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict within the internationally supported format of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group co-chairmanship. This format is by far the most effective for our particular case on several accounts, not least due to its capacity to sustain focus on a compromise solution to defuse tensions and prevent escalation. Armenia welcomes the unwavering and continued support of the United Nations system and the Secretary-General for the established format of negotiations and for the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs.

In April, Azerbaijan unleashed a military aggression against Nagorno Karabakh, thereby violating the trilateral agreements of 1994 and 1995 on a ceasefire, signed by Azerbaijan, Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia. The ceasefire agreements do not have time limitations; however, Azerbaijan undertook efforts, including within the United Nations, to challenge the validity of the agreements. From the very beginning of the Azerbaijani aggression, the civilian infrastructure and civilian population — including children and the elderly — were intentional targets of indiscriminate violence. Among the earliest civilian victims were a 12-year-old boy and a 92-year-old woman, who were brutally tortured, mutilated and killed. Three captive soldiers of the Nagorno Karabakh defence forces were beheaded by Azerbaijan armed forces in the style of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. This barbarity

was subsequently celebrated in the towns and villages of Azerbaijan and publicized on its social networks.

It is imperative to preclude dangerous attempts to seek a military solution to the issue. The implementation of the confidence-building measures proposed by the OSCE Minsk Group co-Chairs, including the proposals agreed at the Vienna and Saint Petersburg summits by the Presidents earlier this year, will certainly serve that purpose. It is critical for the international community to urge Azerbaijan to strictly commit to the 1994 and 1995 trilateral agreements. Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh have accepted and remain wholly committed to the early implementation of the latest proposals. To date, Azerbaijan continues to reject the implementation of the agreed proposals. We reiterate our firm position that a clear and unequivocal commitment to the ceasefire and confidence-building measures on the part of the parties concerned is the only way to create an environment conducive to the peace process.

In conclusion, Armenia believes in the viability and efficiency of both the United Nations and regional arrangements and mechanisms in enhancing trust, confidence-building and dialogue among nations. Regional and subregional organizations have an essential role to play. They often have a better understanding of local circumstances, tailored approaches and effective tools, as well their own resources and financing. Cooperation and dialogue among States from the subregional to the regional and global levels have been and remain the modus operandi for the sustainability of peace, security and cooperation.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): My delegation had no intention to speak at this debate, but some thoughts expressed during the discussion encouraged us to take the floor.

In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, Member States conferred upon the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and agreed that, in carrying out its duties under that responsibility, the Council acts on their behalf. At the same time, Chapter VIII of the Charter encourages cooperation between the United Nations and regional arrangements in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Since the 2005 World Summit and the adoption of resolution 1631 (2005), important progress has been achieved in enhancing cooperation between the United Nations and regional partners across a full range of areas — from the maintenance of international peace and security and humanitarian assistance, to development and the protection of human rights. Indeed, in a number of instances, the relevant international organizations have proved to be indispensable mechanisms for promoting international and regional peace and security and cooperation in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. At the same time, serious challenges remain. While regional organizations are normally well positioned to understand the causes of armed conflict owing to their knowledge of the region, it is obvious that not all of them can boast the reality, political will and institutional capacity to ensure compliance by Member States with their statutory commitments.

First and foremost, it is critical that all Member States adhere to their obligations as they laid out in the Charter of the United Nations with respect to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States. Unfortunately, we still face instances in which States that are responsible for violations of international law and regional politically binding obligations not the only continue to benefit from membership of regional and subregional organizations, but also abuse such a privilege with a view to undermining the efforts towards achieving a peaceful solution to regional security problems.

Furthermore, as far as regional arrangements established for collective defence purposes are concerned, it is essential to avoid any ambiguity in terms of their area of responsibility and the conditions of invoking collective defence and to ensure that their respective functions are framed and guided by the Charter of the United Nations. It is also important that the collective defence shield not be misused by aggressors for consolidating the situations created by the unlawful use of force against other States.

Our firm belief is that the United Nations should be resorted to by Member States in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Organization, and not misused for the political advantage of those who gravely violate international law and advocate the culture of impunity.

It is regrettable that the contribution of the delegation of Armenia to our debate was to focus its statement on misinformation and misinterpretation, the only purpose of which is to deny its responsibility for the crimes committed in the course of its aggression against Azerbaijan.

While speaking in the Security Council, the representative of Armenia omitted a reference to the relevant resolutions adopted by the Council in response to armed attacks against Azerbaijan and the subsequent occupation of its territories. None of the Security Council resolutions were implemented by Armenia, which continues to take purposeful measures to consolidate the gains of the use of force and ethnic cleansing and build up its military presence in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. By disregarding the Charter of the United Nations and international law, Armenia clearly demonstrates who is actually pursuing a destructive and militaristic policy and openly challenging the ongoing political efforts towards a resolution of the conflict.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.7797

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7797th meeting

Monday, 31 October 2016, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen; Mr. Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Mr. Muhannad Hadi, Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, World Food Programme.

Mr. O'Brien is joining us via audio-teleconference from Bahrain.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed: I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to update the Council on the latest developments in Yemen and challenges facing efforts to ensure the country's return to peace and stability.

Recent developments in Yemen run counter to the commitments to peace made by the parties to the United Nations and the international community. The security situation is dire, and the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate despite the efforts of the humanitarian agencies.

With regard to security, on 8 October the Grand Hall in Sana'a was subject to a tragic and painful attack, where nearly 1,000 Yemenis were gathered to pay their condolences at a funeral, killing more than 140 and injuring 550. I visited the site of the attack several days ago, together with family members of the victims, and saw for myself the shocking scale of destruction. The Mayor of Sana'a, Abdel Kader Hilal — a seasoned politician known for his bravery and commitment to peace until his very last day, and two members of the De-escalation and Coordination Committee (DCC) — were among the victims of the attack.

The bombing of a funeral is contrary to all Yemeni norms and traditions, as well as to international humanitarian law, and the perpetrators must be held accountable. I extend once again my deepest condolences to the families of the victims and wish a speedy recovery to those who were wounded in this attack. I commend the statements issued by the families of the victims, calling for restraint and a thorough investigation of the incident. This is a clear demonstration of their sense of nationalism and commitment to peace.

The Arab coalition has taken responsibility for the attack and its joint incidents assessment team conducted a rapid preliminary investigation, which recommended action against those involved and a revision of the coalition's rules of engagement. It will be very important to complete the investigations and to ensure the accountability of those involved.

Sadly, the 8 October attack was not the only incident in which civilians and civilian infrastructure were targeted in the past weeks. On 3 October, the shelling of the Bir Basha district of Taiz from areas controlled by forces of the Houthi and General People's Congress (GPC), resulted in nine civilian deaths, including three children. Taiz has been subject to the indiscriminate and lethal shelling of its residential areas that has caused great damage to the city and its population and must stop. These incidents are a horrific reminder of the consequences of a war that has blighted the country during the past 18 months of conflict.

The conduct of the parties on the ground is contrary to their prior commitments to engage fully and constructively in the United Nations-mediated peace process. I called on the parties to recommit to the 10 April terms and conditions for the cessation of hostilities. Although I would have preferred an open-ended cessation of hostilities, I was able to gain agreement on a 72-hour pause, which entered into force on 19 October.

I regret to report that both sides were involved in significant violations of the cessation of hostilities from its very first day. I am deeply concerned by the escalation of hostilities, which has continued at an alarming rate in the past few weeks. Fighting has escalated in Taiz, Mareb, Al-Jawf and Hajjah and along the border with Saudi Arabia, where ballistic missile attacks have increased in frequency and range. The

targeting of the area of Mecca al-Mukarramah and Jeddah was a dangerous development that may affect the course of the war and the feelings of more than 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide.

I am also concerned that, according to reports, international vessels travelling off the coast of Yemen have come under fire from Houthi-controlled territories in recent weeks. A United Arab Emirates vessel was targeted in the Strait of Bab El-Mandab. United States destroyers travelling through international waters were reportedly targeted by direct missile attacks and reportedly responsibilityonded by firing on Houthi radar sites. These incidents risk causing a more acute escalation of the conflict and threaten the security of international maritime movement. I thank the Council for its call on 4 October for such attacks to cease immediately.

In southern Yemen, Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the so-called Islamic State continue to attack State institutions and civilian targets. In Aden on 1 October, a suicide bomber killed one civilian and injured three others, and on 29 and 30 September gunmen affiliated with the Islamic State assassinated a retired intelligence officer and a security officer. As part of their counter-terrorism efforts, Yemeni security forces raided the house of a prominent Islamic State leader and confiscated a variety of weapons and explosives. In Abyan, counter-terrorism forces killed three militants, including a high-ranking AQAP affiliate, and arrested two others.

The escalating military situation continues to exacerbate a very dire humanitarian situation, which requires far greater attention from the international community. Local authorities in Yemen are unable to provide basic social services for the population. This is particularly true in the health sector, where only 45 per cent of facilities are functional. In addition to the growing difficulty Yemenis are experiencing in obtaining medical treatment at home, many Yemenis are also unable to seek treatment abroad due to the prohibition of commercial flights from Sana'a. In that context, I call for the immediate resumption of commercial flights to and from Sana'a. I also call on the Houthis and GPC to ensure that access for humanitarian agencies is free from bureaucratic impediments and intimidation so that all who need assistance can receive it. My colleagues Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mohannad Hadi, Regional Director of the World Food Programme for the Middle East and North African region, will provide the Council with a more detailed briefing of the humanitarian situation and the United Nations efforts to provide assistance.

I should add that the deteriorating economic situation threatens to create a far greater humanitarian crisis in the coming months if urgent action is not taken to save the day. Salary payments for most civil servants — a primary source of income for much of the population — have already ceased. Unless they are resumed quickly, many more Yemenis will face destitution and be forced to rely on humanitarian aid to survive. All parties, including the Government of Yemen, the Houthis and GPC, must commit to cooperating to ensure the continued functioning of the Central Bank and a rapid resumption of salaries throughout the country.

Despite the international community's calls for the Yemeni parties to fully commit to the peace process, the parties have continued to take unilateral actions that risk undermining the prospects for peace. On 2 October, the High Political Council established by the Houthis and GPC asked the former Governor of Aden to form a new Government. President Hadi Mansour's decision to replace the Governor of the Central Bank and relocate the Bank to Aden has created further economic uncertainty at a time when urgent measures to save the economy are necessary. Prime Minister Ahmed Bin-Dagher announced via social media plans to convene a national body to ratify the draft constitution. I again urge the parties to refrain from taking any further measures, which will only complicate reaching a negotiated settlement to put Yemen on the path to peace.

I have conducted extensive consultations with the Yemeni parties and members of the international community over the past few weeks, and presented the parties with a comprehensive and detailed road map to end the conflict. The road map is consistent with resolution 2216 (2015) and other relevant resolutions, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, and the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference. The road map contains a set of sequenced political and security steps, conducted in parallel, that would help Yemen return to peace and orderly political transition.

The road map foresees the creation of military and security committees that would supervise withdrawals

and the hand-over of weapons in Sana'a, Al-Hudaydah and Taiz. The committees would also be tasked with ensuring the complete end of military violence and the safety and security of the population and State institutions. The road-map also lays out interim political arrangements, including the appointment of a new Vice-President and the formation of a Government of national unity that would lead Yemen's transition process and oversee the resumption of political dialogue, the completion of the constitutional process and, ultimately, elections. I have been informed unofficially that the parties have rejected the road map. This demonstrates that the political elite in Yemen remain unable to overcome their differences and prioritize national, public interest over personal interests. It is time for the parties to realize that there can be no peace without concessions and no security without agreement. They should base their positions on the question of how to ensure security and stability for the Yemeni people.

I will return to the region immediately following this briefing to start consultations with the parties in Sana'a and Riyadh with the aim of reaching a detailed agreement based on the road map. It is now the responsibility of the delegations to prioritize peace and stability. The road map and the agreements discussed in Kuwait should allow the peace process to move towards a comprehensive settlement in the coming weeks if the parties engage in good faith and demonstrate a sense of political and national awareness.

I am grateful for the international community's continued support to my proposal for a comprehensive agreement and calls for a cessation of hostilities. The quadrilateral meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the United States, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in Jeddah, New York and London have supported these efforts, along with their counterparts from the remaining members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. I also thank the Foreign Ministers of the Sultanate of Oman, France, Egypt, Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain and the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, for their support. I am also grateful to the Council members for their unwavering support for the efforts to restore peace in Yemen.

After 18 months of horrific fighting, thousands of deaths, injuries, unspeakable human suffering and total economic collapse, we all need to ask how long Yemenis will remain hostages to personal and reckless political decisions. What are the parties waiting for to sign a political agreement? Have they not understood that there are no winners in wars? The road map I have proposed to the parties is widely supported by the international community because it provides a comprehensive solution and includes guarantees for the political representation of all political groupings.

I would like to ask the Council for its full support of the peace plan, an immediate cessation of hostilities and the release of all prisoners and detainees. And to the Yemenis I say that the dawn of peace could be near if those responsible decide to prioritize the national interest and start working on rebuilding a stable State that guarantees the rights of all of its people without discrimination.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: There can be no humanitarian solution to the conflict in Yemen. There needs to be a political solution, beginning with an immediate cessation of hostilities. I echo the Special Envoy's call. All parties and all with influence over them must work towards peace. Each day that this war continues, it is civilians who suffer. Each day that the conflict drags on, we are inexorably propelled ever closer to an entire generation of Yemenis whose formative years will have been spent in the chaos of combat.

This humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen is a man-made disaster, where conflict has exacerbated and exponentially increased the suffering of the 50 per cent of Yemeni population who were already in dire and extreme poverty. Repeatedly over the past 19 months, the people of Yemen have been robbed of their lives, their hope and their right to live in dignity. Thousands have been killed, tens of thousands have been injured, more than 3 million have been forced to leave their homes, and 7 million suffer the daily anxiety of not knowing where their next meal might come from.

I have recently returned from Sana'a and Al-Hudaydah, and in my previous visit I reached Aden as well. I saw the desperation, fear and resignation in the deep-sunken eyes of people I met who have lost all hope — moved either to anger or powerless despair. In short, since my last briefing to the Council, the humanitarian situation has become worse and 80 per cent of Yemenis — some 21.2 million people — are in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian

actors are being asked to fill the void left by the political power vacuum, but this is not a viable solution.

All the parties are reminded that adherence to international humanitarian law is an obligation, not an option. Perpetrators on all sides must be held responsible for the legions of violations of international humanitarian law. The Council and its members also have responsibilities in this regard. I also stress the need for effective, independent investigations into allegations of war crimes and to prosecute suspects.

Since the collapse of the cessation of hostilities in August, Yemenis across the country, in areas controlled by various warring factions or none, have endured near-daily attacks on civilians, civilian institutions and public infrastructure. In August, the Saudi-led coalition bombed a health facility supported by Médecins Sans Frontières and a school in Sa'ada, and the attack on the Grand Hall funeral gathering in Sana'a earlier this month — for which the Saudi-led coalition has taken responsibility — left at least 140 people dead and 550 injured. And although there is no equivalence between those killing with air power, available only to one side of the fight, and those on the other side killing with land-based weaponry, the Houthi/Saleh forces have indiscriminately shelled Taiz and other locations, as well as towns and installations inside Saudi Arabia, reportedly using ballistic missiles.

Humanitarian workers are also prevented from doing their work. Armed Houthi and Saleh forces routinely intimidate, delay and harass humanitarians, threatening the Yemenis' last lifeline with arrests and deportation, or demanding the diversion of humanitarian assistance to their fighters. These are all unacceptable breaches of humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.

The drawn-out nature of Yemen's conflict is having a devastating effect on public institutions, which are increasingly unable to provide basic social services. A quarter of the population depends on those employed on the public payroll. Yet paychecks are coming with less regularity and the ability to withdraw cash is disappearing amidst a liquidity crisis. This is a foreshadowing of the impeding collapse of Yemen's economy, which is already desperately poor and hollowed out by corruption. The Central Bank has been unilaterally moved to Aden. Humanitarians do not have the capacity or the resources to provide services to a population of 26 million Yemenis. Our joint appeal is less than half funded.

The complete, permanent collapse of public institutions must be prevented. While the primary duty lies with the Government of Yemen, the de facto Houthi authorities and the previous Saleh regime, I call upon anyone with any influence to heed this call, including by ensuring that the salaries of doctors and nurses and other critical civil servants are paid.

Where the failure of public services is felt perhaps most acutely is the health sector. Fewer than half of the rudimentary health facilities remain functional. Earlier this month, as I said, I visited Al-Hudaydah, held by Houthi/Saleh forces. Al-Hudaydah governorate is the poorest in Yemen. I met with children and mothers, a few fathers and the desperately overworked doctors, nurses and carers at the paediatric centre at Al-Thawra hospital, where the machines and lights frequently cut out due to shortages of generator fuel, and the medicine cabinets were empty. Easily treatable chronic illnesses are becoming death sentences. Yemenis, old and young, are dying every day because of the deprivation of basic goods and services. Since March 2015,10,000 children under the age of five have perished from preventable diseases as a result of the sharp decline in the availability of immunizations and remedies for diarrhoea and pneumonia. Also at risk are migrants from the Horn of Africa and the more than 3 million internally displaced, nearly half of whom are children. They are particularly dependent on assistance, and on supplies getting in by port or air — neither which is getting in at the moment — and are vulnerable to the spread of disease.

Yemen is one step away from famine. I met an 18-year-old woman with her 3-year-old baby, who was bedridden with severe malnutrition, making it difficult to eat; she is barely surviving on milk and tea. I met 8-year-old children who looked like 2-year old toddlers due to severe malnutrition and the resulting health complications. We can only imagine how many more children and teenagers are suffering and dying of hunger and never make it to a hospital. As I learned while in Yemen, over 14 million people food insecure; 7 million are severely food insecure and do not know where their next meal is coming from, as I said earlier. Over 2 million are malnourished nationwide, including 370,000 children who are severely malnourished.

On top of this already unthinkable suffering, cholera is rearing its ugly head. There are now 61 confirmed cases of cholera, with more than 1,700 more suspected cases in 10 governorates. To date, the Ministry of

Health has confirmed 4 cholera-related deaths and 42 deaths associated with acute watery diarrhoea. But the caseload is almost certainly much higher owing to a lack of testing kits. The United Nations and its partners are establishing 21 cholera treatment centres, but that is insufficient to stop the escalating spread.

As before the conflict, the vast majority of the needs of the Yemeni people are met through commercial deliveries. The United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) is a unique first initiative in such arrangements pulled together by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and now run by the United Nations Office for Project Services. I take this opportunity to call for the renewal of its mandate. Let us back something that is working. UNVIM has cleared over 190 commercial vessels to successfully offload over 3 million metric tons of food, fuel and supplies at ports in Al-Hudaydah port, Ras Isa and Al-Saleef since May.

However, there are currently approximately 40 vessels waiting to offload approximately 1.4 million metric tons of cargo, including approximately 600,000 metric tons of food. Offloading cargo can take up to 30 days on average, because of inefficient port management, financial disputes between shippers and, above all, slow offloading owing to limited capacity at Al-Hudaydah port, which was severely damaged by air strikes — albeit denied — in August 2015. Those cranes need to be removed quickly to make way for emergency mobile cranes.

Profiteering from commercial imports in a country where 90 per cent of food must be imported is unacceptable in the face of a humanitarian disaster. Since February 2016, fuel imports have averaged a fifth of the pre-air-strikes levels. The coalition and the local port authorities need to ensure rapid and safe access for cleared vessels to reach the ports, especially Al-Hudaydah port. I also call on donors to support the rehabilitation of the damaged port infrastructure in Al-Hudaydah, which is the lifeline of the country. The United Nations is trying to accelerate the procurement of mobile cranes to dramatically increase the port's capacity, but that is a short-term solution at best.

In the same vein, I echo the calls for the coalition and the Government of Yemen to immediately resume commercial flights to and from Sana'a. Saudi Arabia controls the airspace over Yemen, generally, and Sana'a, in particular. It is within its power and is its choice to permit that. Since Yemenia stopped flying into Sana'a, thousands of Yemenis have found themselves stranded, including students who need to pursue their studies abroad and patients who need medical care not available in Yemen today. Many lives could be saved if only people could travel freely to obtain that medical treatment. For instance, the United Nations worked tirelessly to organize life-saving evacuations via air of wounded civilians form the 8 October attack on the Great Hall. The Iranians and, quickly thereafter, the Kingdom of Saudia Arabia also offered to assist with evacuations. Yet politics, bureaucratic impediments and other obstacles prevented us from doing so. Clearly, the people of Yemen cannot be asked to depend upon such improvisations in order to receive essential medical care. I take this opportunity to commend Oman which was able to evacuate more than 100 people for medical treatment, but a second evacuation could not be arranged in time before the ceasefire ended.

Since I last briefed the Council, humanitarian partners were reaching 3.5 million every month between January and July. Now they are reaching 4.6 million per month, despite all challenges. There has been a steady increase in deliveries to people in need across the country, and an additional million people are now being reached with food aid every month, with more than 4 million Yemenis receiving food aid each day. Partners have provided essential health services through fixed and mobile teams, including both trauma and secondary health care, and provided medicines and supplies to health facilities that serve millions.

The United Nations, under the strong leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator, together with our humanitarian partners, stands ready to do more, if only the humanitarian access constraints could be eased and we had more financial support. But that requires coordination with the coalition, the myriad of local actors at the central level in Sana'a and other parties to the conflict. Bureaucratic impediments in Yemen were already a problem before the current conflict began and have since then grown more complex. The United Nations continues to negotiate access with all relevant actors, including the authorities in Sana'a.

This man-made brutal humanitarian disaster is now the catastrophe, which I had said was "looming" in my first briefing (see S/PV.7494) to the Council 18 months ago. The conflict has gone on for too long. It is high time that the parties put the Yemeni people first and reach a peaceful agreement in order to salvage what is

left of the infrastructure, the economy and the social services of the country and, most importantly, address the aspirations of the Yemeni people to live in a peaceful society. If disregarded, the collapse of the country will have menacing consequences not only for the Yemeni people, but the entire region. The parties, their proxies and those with influence over them — namely, the Yemeni Government, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the regional Gulf nations in the Gulf Cooperation Council, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and other Western partners of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia — all have key roles and influence, as do the Houthi authorities, former President Saleh and his supporters and Iran. They can arrest this war and this suffering. They can get behind the framework agreement put forward by the Special Envoy and secure peace in 30 days. It is a political decision which takes courage and leadership, and we cannot wait.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Hadi.

Mr. Hadi: Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the Arab world and has been devastated by a war that has set the country back for decades. The state of Yemen is broken. That is what the Yemenis themselves told me last week. They feel as though they are dying in silence and that they have been forgotten by the world. Yemen has been plagued by years of instability and widespread poverty. Before the conflict, Yemen was already suffering. Many people were already suffering from food insecurity. Simply put, the war has aggravated that situation. Basic social services were on the verge of collapse. Today, more than 20 million people are in true need of some form of assistance. How we have reached this stage is an important question, but what is more important today is that I share with you an eyewitness account of the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

I have just returned from Yemen after a 7-day mission. That was actually my second trip to Yemen in two months and my third since the crisis started. On my latest trip, I visited Sana'a, Hajjah and A-Hudaydah. I am not a stranger to Yemen. I worked and lived there for the World Food Programme (WFP) for three years in the 1990s. But this time, as I was approaching Sana'a's airport, looking out from the WFP-operated flight — which is one of the few special flights that still service Sana'a — I saw the damage that the airport had incurred.

Several things came to mind. I wondered how people live. How do people come back to Yemen if they are stranded outside the country. If someone required medical evacuation, I wondered, how would that situation be handled? As a staff member for the World Food Programme, I also thought about what would happen if we were asked to carry out an airlift for urgently needed food and medicines to Sana'a. Would the airport be able to handle such an operation? I really do not know. I began to ask my colleagues if the airport could handle such an operation.

On our way to the WFP offices from the airport, I really looked into the faces of the Yemeni people on the streets, among whom, as I mentioned, I had lived for three years. What I saw were the signs of a lot of wear and tear on their faces. They truly looked sad as they watched another United Nations convoy pass through the streets of Sana'a, not knowing if it was a sign of hope or an end to the devastating war. When I arrived at the office, again, I looked into the faces of the staff and met with them. When I met with the national staff, I especially sensed that they were actually torn between fulfilling their humanitarian duties and taking care of their own crises at home. Many among the United Nations staff are actually displaced within Sana'a.

For the first few days of my mission in Sana'a, I met with local authorities civil servants. The one message that came up consistently in every single meeting was that needs are increasing. There is a growing number of people who are in desperate need of assistance and the humanitarian operations are not keeping up. The food security situation in Yemen is deteriorating rapidly. Hunger is becoming epidemic everywhere. This June, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification revealed that over 14 million people in Yemen are food insecure. Of those, 7 million are severely food insecure. It is one thing to read those reports, but it is another to go and speak with a mother and father who cannot serve a meal to their children at the end of the day. As Mr. O'Brien said, those people do not know when their next meal is coming. It is really scary to not know if you can offer your children a meal. In some governorates, 70 per cent of the population is struggling to feed themselves. Nine out of Yemen's twenty-two governorates are classified as level three. In other words, those governorates are at emergency

levels of food insecurity. In simple terms, that means they are one step away from hunger.

Once I left Sana'a, I went to Hajjah to see and speak to people in the field. Our first stop was at the health centre. It was crowded, with people queued up almost until the entrance of the hospital. Some of the beds had two kids in them. Almost all of the children that I saw were malnourished, and some were severely malnourished. The mothers of those children told me that they had had to travel long distances from remote areas in order to make it to the clinic. They told me that they had to borrow money from neighbours and relatives, and even to sell their assets, in order to pay for treatment.

I am sorry to say that that is the positive side of things. I can only imagine what I would have seen if I had had the opportunity to visit more remote locations. I would have seen parents looking at their dying children who could not afford the long journey to the hospitals — hospitals that may or may not have had the capacity to respond to them. According to UNICEF , 1.5 million children in Yemen suffer from acute malnutrition, including 370,000 with severe acute malnutrition, a life-threatening condition that requires urgent treatment. The figure of 370,000 represents an astonishing increase of 65 per cent from 2014. Children suffering from severe malnutrition are 10 times more at risk of dying than their peers because their immune systems are extremely weak.

Our next stop was at the WFP General Food Distribution office in Hajjah. The streets were crowded with thousands of people lined up at the entrance. Since February, WFP has had to split rations to ensure that we reach as many food insecure people as possible. We had already planned to reach 3 million people, but with the rapid increase in the number of hungry people, we were trying to give everybody something. Our teams and partners have been forced to reach 6 million people every month with half a ration. That is not the best way to fight malnutrition, but it is the way to keep as many people alive as possible in this situation. Many families were generous enough to share their struggles with me and the team. They told us how they experience hunger every day and, sadder still, how they see it in the faces of their children. For the first time, I found myself helpless and unable to offer even words of support, let alone promises of increased help and assistance that we might offer.

Everyone I met spoke about the increasing food prices. Food prices are more than 20 per cent higher than they were before the war. Yemen's middle class is now joining the ranks of those who cannot put food on the table for their children. That is really worrying. Many civil servants have not been paid for few months now. They are no longer even able to purchase food.

On the road from Hajjah to Al-Hudaydah, we stopped along the mountains to speak to one of the farmers. He was harvesting millet and recounted to us the details of how his crops had been damaged because of the conflict. When I asked him how he was planning to survive and what he was going to do given that he had already lost his harvest, he kept repeating the words that I heard from almost every struggling Yemeni that I met, which translate to "we are in the hands of God".

The road from Hajjah to Al-Hudaydah was the same road that I remember from 20 years ago. I have driven that road many times, except that this time it was destroyed. Some bridges were destroyed; it was a bumpy road and we had to take too many detours. It was difficult. I then wondered how the road was going to be used when the rainy season started. How is food going to be moved from Al-Hudaydah to the rest of the governorates?

Then we visited the port of Al-Hudaydah. As everybody has said, I looked at the cranes and the port equipment and so many things were damaged. Yemen imports 90 per cent of its food requirements. The port of Al-Hudaydahis a lifeline to many Yemeni people. I was even told that the labourers are no longer feeling safe enough to work in the port, so there is a lot of congestion, a lack of equipment and labourers who are not working. Even a WFP vessel that was carrying urgently needed food had been waiting for weeks to dock so that the food could be delivered to the people who needed it.

Our next stop was Al-Thawra hospital in Al-Hudaydah, which was a visit that proved to be the defining moment of my mission. I saw the faces of children that have been engraved in my mind as iconic images of the crisis in Yemen. I saw children and images — this time real ones — that I have never seen in my 25 years of working for the World Food Programme. I will never forget the children that I saw.

I am sure many of those present have seen the disturbing images on the news recently, including the heartbreaking photograph of 18-year-old, Ms. Saida

Ahmed Baghili. She was in the hospital when we visited. The doctors told me that they had been seeing an increase in children with severe acute malnutrition. Malnutrition compromises the immune system of those children who, like Saida, suffer from other health complications. That all leading to high rates of child mortality. The global acute malnutrition rate among children in Al-Hudaydag, like Saida is one of the highest around the world. The images of those children and their mothers shocked me and my colleagues. We all stood helpless. Overcome by emotion, I could not decide who to sympathize with more — a malnourished child sitting on a bed, too tired and sick to even cry, or his mother next to him, too hungry and tired to support her child. That really hurt me, not only as a humanitarian worker but as a father.

Hunger and malnutrition are solvable problems but only through the right intervention at the right time. That is why we need to focus on helping the Yemeni people. That is why we have to make sure that we have the right access. I would like to thank the donors that have supported and continue to support WFP in implementating such programmes. We have been able to work and assist, but only where we have access.

There are also challenges in getting timely security clearances for the delivery of assistance. The fluid security situation and ongoing fighting definitely do not help WFP and the rest of the humanitarians to work better to dispatch aid, to monitor and to make sure that the right intervention is carried out at the right time. That is something that we worry about, and it is one of our main concerns. On the long drive back to Sana'a, I had time to reflect on what I had seen. The situation is undoubtedly beyond critical. Resources and political support are urgently needed from the international community. In 2016, WFP in Yemen has been funded only 34 per cent of the $6 million needed.

I am not a politician and WFP is proud of its neutral and impartial stance. I am here not to discuss political matters, but rather to illustrate the impact of the current conflict on the humanitarian needs of the Yemeni people. An entire generation is crippled by hunger today in Yemen, and we rely on the international community to support us in this challenging time.

I met many people in Yemen, and I promised them that I would convey their suffering to the world.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Hadi for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this will be the last time that my delegation takes the floor during the Russian presidency of the Security Council, let me thank you, Sir, and your entire team for guiding our work in a month that has been particularly challenging. Allow me in particular to highlight your careful and balanced work in the Security Council with regard to the process of selecting the next Secretary-General of the Organization.

I would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed; Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien; and Regional Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. Muhannad Hadi, for their briefings.

Uruguay is deeply troubled by the worsening of the conflict in Yemen in the light of the most heinous violations and abuses of international humanitarian law and human rights law taking place daily. The scarce media coverage of the grave conflict in Yemen does not absolve the perpetrators, the international community or the Security Council of the responsibility they shoulder. We are concerned about the ongoing violence and the dismantling of institutions in the country as a result of the increase in terrorist activity. Uruguay regrets the repeated failures of the peace process, including the most recent attempt to establish a 72-hour ceasefire. In that regard, I support the resumption of the negotiation process, which for many months has failed to achieve tangible results, and which is now dependent on the impact of a weakened road map.

Uruguay reiterates its appeal to the parties to resume dialogue and to fully comply with their commitment to ceasing hostilities to allow for the conditions conducive to establishing peace. Actors in the region must demonstrate their commitment to peace and, in particular, those countries that have influence with the parties must take vigorous steps to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. In that regard, I would like to highlight the work conducted by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed, and to express my delegation's support for his continued efforts to find a solution to end the conflict. We would also like to deeply thank all those involved in lending humanitarian assistance in Yemen, for their tireless and courageous work in bringing hope to the suffering population.

Uruguay strongly condemns the repeated attacks on civilian targets in Yemen — indiscriminate air strikes, mortar and missile attacks that destroy hospitals, schools, markets, residential buildings and infrastructure, and cluster bombs, anti-personnel mines and snipers, which all wreak havoc on the civilian population. We also denounce the attacks launched from within Yemen on holy sites in Saudi Arabia and on shipping in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. All players in Yemen are demonstrating a complete disregard for the rules governing armed conflict and causing deep suffering and disastrous consequences for the civilian population trapped in the combat areas.

In both Yemen and Syria, we are witnessing unprecedented levels of dehumanization. In that regard, allow me to make special reference to the terrorist attack — I repeat, the terrorist attack — carried out on 8 October in Sana'a on a community centre where a funeral was taking place and in which more than 650 people died and more than 500 were injured. I refer to it as a terrorist attack because in this country, where I was educated and have lived for many years, I was taught that if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, with its distinctive quack, then we must acknowledge that it is, in fact, a duck. The operation to which I just referred was carried out using tactics that are usually employed by terrorists. It was a surprise attack and timed to occur when the highest number of people were in attendance. There was one explosion, followed by a deliberate pause for several minutes to allow first responders to arrive, and then a second explosion. That is a typical terrorist operation but, in this particular case, two explosions occurred to ensure maximum destruction.

In the various cultures, societies and religions represented within the Organization, we all have similar traditions in order to pay tribute to life and death. We celebrate births and we grieve when someone dies. I wonder which of our societies, cultures, religions or gods justifies a terrorist attack on people attending a funeral. Who would feel so all-powerful to order such barbarity? Who would feel that much above reproach to carry out such an atrocity?

Furthermore, that attack was not carried out with homemade weapons. No improvised explosive devices were used. No conventional or barrel bombs were used, nor were cars or trucks loaded with explosives employed. The Panel of Experts on Yemen stated that, in the ruins of the community centre, they found the remnants of a clearly identified sophisticated guidance system for a specific type of aerially launched bomb. The type of bomb used has the unique feature of being encased in a hard steel shell that allows the bomb to penetrate a concrete structure and explode only after it hits the ground. Although on a smaller scale, I think that it is similar to the so-called bunker-busting bombs that are being used liberally throughout Aleppo. There is also information that that type of guidance system is manufactured only by two companies in the world, while the bomb that was used is manufactured by only one company. It is clear that neither the guidance system nor the bombs used can be acquired on the black market. They can be sourced only through Government-to-Government deals, and at very high prices. In the Spanish language we say that weapons are loaded by the devil, but weapons are fired by man and the responsibility is borne by the person pressing the launch button or pulling the trigger, as well as by the individual who facilitates access to the weapon in the first place.

It goes without saying that attempts to explain what occurred have already begun, with claims that it was an inadvertent mistake caused by inaccurate intelligence and that extensive investigations are under way to determine the facts of what occurred. I would point out that in this case we are talking about two inadvertent mistakes, as two attacks were carried out. In addition, may I mention what extraordinary precision must be required to repeat the same mistake on the same community centre. I wonder if it was the same type of mistake that led Médecins sans Frontières to evacuate six hospitals in Yemen on account of the repeated air attacks it suffered, despite the fact that the geographic coordinates of the exact location of those hospitals were communicated and sent to all parties concerned. It appears that someone continues to commit the same mistakes. In those cases it was also said that extensive investigations would be carried out to determine the facts but, thus far, we have no information whatsoever about who carried out the attacks or who supplied the bombs that were used.

It should be pointed out that the Council has not been able to issue even a statement condemning the horrendous attack carried out on 8 October in Sana'a. It seems that nothing can move the Council.

Neither excuses nor laments, be it because a mistake was made or because of a claimed attack against terrorists, will raise from the dead the hundreds of children, women and elderly persons lying crushed

beneath the ruins in Sana'a and Aleppo. Uruguay condemns all attacks against civilians, be it in Yemen, Syria, Iraq or elsewhere, irrespective of whom the victims are. We cannot condemn aerial attacks that kill civilians in Syria but remain mute in the face of similar ones in Yemen. There is no place for double standards in this respect, as we are frequently reminded by our colleague Rafael Ramirez Carreño. Those responsible for these appalling atrocities and their accomplices must be held accountable for their crimes.

It is time for a cessation of hostilities and a return to the negotiating table. We all know very well that these conflicts have no military solution. The only way of resolving them is through political agreements that are negotiated directly between the parties.

At the risk of repeating myself, I wish to state once again with total conviction that Colombia is providing the world with an exemplary model of an unrelenting quest for peace. But, of course, in order to do this, a great deal of courage is required, not just the superficial valour demonstrated by beating one's chest and the arrogance of brandishing weapons, but, rather, the deep-rooted courage to extend one's hand to the enemy, clasping an olive branch as a sign of peace.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I wish to thank Ismail, Stephen and Muhannad for their very powerful briefings. They all are doing vital work on this issue, and, as Security Council penholder on Yemen, I want to reiterate at this meeting today our appreciation for their tireless efforts.

As they all have highlighted, the sheer scale of the crisis facing the people of Yemen means that there can be no letup in our efforts. It is a political crisis, a humanitarian crisis, a crisis where the violence simply will not end. As a result, civilians continue to suffer, with more than 14 million people now food-insecure, and more than 21 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. That is the tragic cost of the ongoing conflict in Yemen.

In response, we all know what needs to happen. First, the violence must stop. There needs to be an enduring, meaningful cessation of hostilities. I was proud of the United Kingdom's efforts to help secure a ceasefire early this month, but it is clear that three days is simply not enough. We therefore call on the parties to renew their commitment and implement an immediate, sustainable cease-fire.

In support of that goal, we also need to make sure that the De-escalation and Coordination Committee has the support, training and resources that it needs. The Committee is a crucial mechanism for building trust and addressing violations. If the Yemeni parties are serious about peace, they should engage with it fully.

Sadly, any signs of de-escalation have been elusive of late. Only last week, a long-range missile was fired from Sa'dah into Saudi Arabia, reportedly at the King Abdulaziz international airport, north of Jeddah. This attack by the Houthi and Saleh loyallists was provocative and unacceptable. All sides need to show restraint.

We were shocked and appalled by the terrible loss of life in the airstrikes on the funeral hall in Sana'a earlier this month. We immediately underlined our deep concerns at the ministerial level with the Saudi Government. More than 140 people died that day. Elbio has just spoken very powerfully about it, and I share his disappointment and his regret at the fact that the Security Council was unable to agree on the draft press statement that the United Kingdom had circulated, which would have strongly condemned the attack.

Despite this failure, the United Kingdom is clear that there must be accountability for that attack. The release of an initial investigation by the coalition's Joint Incidents Assessment Team is a positive step in that direction.

Stopping the violence is just the first step, and even that will not be enough to help the millions of people in need of assistance in Yemen. Regardless of progress on the ceasefire, we also need to make concerted strides on improving the humanitarian situation. In the General Assembly last month, the United Kingdom hosted an event that raised $100 million for Yemen; half of that money came from United Kingdom itself. The international community and United Nations agencies also committed to strengthening their response. But money alone is never enough. It counts for very little, in fact, when aid cannot get through. So let us call on the parties to take every step possible to improve humanitarian access, so that we can help alleviate the suffering of the millions in need.

Ultimately, for all of this — the cessation of hostilities and the humanitarian access — to be sustainable, we need the stability that comes only from a political process, and that requires a compromise between the parties. We therefore welcome Ismail's presentation of the road map to the Yemeni parties; it

sets out how that compromise can be achieved, it says clearly the security and political steps that the parties must take to reach a peaceful resolution.

While the path ahead on the political track has become clearer, it is still a path that has yet to be followed fully. We are disappointed at the continuing failure of the Houthis and Saleh to engage on the Sana'a security plan, in defiance of resolution 2216 (2015), and by President Hadi's public rejection of the road map. We hope that he will now receive it and engage on it in good faith. In fact, we call on all parties to engage in good faith with the Special Envoy and to return to negotiations on the basis of the road map and in a spirit of compromise.

As they do so, the Special Envoy will have the full support of the United Kingdom for his efforts to bring the parties together. We take note of his requests just now for full Security Council support, and, as penholder on this issue, we will continue to work on a draft Security Council resolution calling on all parties to do four things: first, return to an immediate cessation of hostilities; secondly, return to negotiations on the basis of the road map; thirdly, bring about accountability for alleged breaches of international humanitarian law; and, fourthly, allow unhindered access to humanitarian aid.

We pledge to continue working with our partners on this resolution in support of the Special Envoy and all his efforts on the road map and on the cessation of hostilities, and, ultimately, on bringing peace to Yemen.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I would like to express my gratitude to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed; Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien; and Mr. Muhannad Hadi of the World Food Programme (WFP) for their comprehensive briefings today. The situation on the ground is dire.

I will focus first on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Hadi vividly described for us. Civilians are the tragic victims of the failure to end the fighting and reach a political agreement. Japan commends the United Nations and all humanitarian workers in Yemen for their tireless efforts under extremely difficult circumstances.

We heard from Under-Secretary-General O'Brien today that 80 per cent of Yemenis are in need of basic humanitarian aid, which underlines the seriousness of this crisis. We also heard that the number may increase further. Japan, together with other international partners, is providing support to help meet these basic needs. We have announced our renewed commitment to financially supporting the United Nations and other international bodies in scaling up operations in Yemen. Food security, health and education are priority areas.

Collapsing public services and the deteriorating economy have only further worsened the devastating humanitarian situation. We were told by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and WFP today about the serious humanitarian problems caused by the destruction of the social infrastructure. We are also concerned by the recent developments surrounding the Central Bank and its relocation from Sana'a to Aden. Japan calls upon the Government of Yemen to avoid taking measures that may affect the activities of commercial banks and stresses the importance of the Central Bank serving the interests of all Yemenis.

A halt to military activities is essential if we are to achieve fundamental solutions to the humanitarian and economic crises in Yemen. One and a half years have already passed since the intensified fighting began. The Yemeni people are deeply suffering and exhausted from the continuous air strikes, shelling and fighting on the ground. All military activities, including attacks beyond the Yemeni territories, must be halted immediately.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed informed us today that he presented the Yemeni Government and the Houthi-General People's Congress delegation with a Yemen road map to address security and political arrangements. This may lead the way to the practical implementation of the three fundamental components for peace and stability in Yemen, namely, the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference and resolution 2216 (2015). Japan welcomes the Special Envoy's work on the road map.

It is unclear, however, whether this document is being seriously considered by the Yemeni parties. Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed told us that President Mansour Hadi has rejected the road map. In the statement issued yesterday, the Houthi-General People's Congress complained that the road map does not contain essential elements for the solution. Although uncertainties remain, it is time for the parties to take their seats at the negotiating table and to immediately resume face-to-face consultations. The parties should undertake good-

faith negotiations under the mediation of the United Nations to reach an agreement.

Now that Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed has presented the road map, there may be a chance to advance the political process. What then should the Council's next step be? I believe that the answer is to send a strong, unified message to the parties. First, we, the Security Council, must call on the parties to resume negotiations immediately, to respect the cessation of hostilities and to allow and facilitate unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access. The group of 18 and some States Members of the United Nations have influence on the parties, but the Council must also play a proactive role. Equally importantly, we must ensure that the negotiations bear fruit. While adopting a resolution is our basic and traditional measure for ensuring implementation, one potential route is for the President of the Security Council to present our unified message at the beginning of the negotiations when they commence.

We are now at a critical juncture for Yemen's future and I would like to request Special Envoy Ould Cheikh Ahmed to redouble his efforts. We strongly encourage convening a new round of negotiations. In addition, the Special Envoy's direct communication with key stakeholders, including President Hadi, Abdul-Malik Al-Houthi and Ali Abdullah Saleh, is crucial to push the political process forward. I would appreciate hearing from Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed about the results of meetings with these figures at our next briefing. Japan will continue to support Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed's efforts.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and the Russian delegation and wish you a successful presidency of the Security Council during this month.

At the outset, with regard to the issue of Yemen, I would like to underscore the aspects that Egypt, the Arab member of the Council, considers red lines, which must not be crossed or breached under any condition and for any reason.

First, Egypt believes that the Government of the Yemeni President, Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, is the only legitimate Government in Yemen. It is the only Government recognized by Egypt and by other members of the international community. Egypt cannot acknowledge the existence of any entity that seeks to hijack the authority of the Government, whether it calls itself a revolutionary council or a supreme political council or any other name. We support any form of settlement agreed on by the Yemeni parties that would ensure comprehensive and wide-scale participation of all factions of Yemeni society.

Secondly, Egypt cannot accept under any condition any threats to the freedom of navigation in Bab-el-Mandeb Strait and the Red Sea. The protection of the freedom of navigation is a lifeline for Egypt and for international trade and transportation. It is at the heart of our Egyptian and Arab national security.

Thirdly, Egypt cannot accept under any pretext the continued attacks on the security of Saudi Arabia, including the launching of ballistic missiles against civilian centres in Saudi Arabia and the violating of its border security. The security of Gulf States and the security of the Arab world is part and parcel of the security of Egypt. In that regard, we vigorously condemn the Houthis' attack on Mecca in an unacceptable precedent. We cannot stay silent in the face of this violation of the sanctity of holy sites and this disregard for innocent civilians and the sentiments of Muslims around the world.

Having reaffirmed these principles, I would like to address the future of the crisis and its settlement.

First, Egypt believes that there is no alternative to a political settlement to the Yemini crisis. Further delay in reaching such a settlement will only lead to more killing, humanitarian suffering and destruction. In this regard, Egypt commends and appreciates the efforts of the United Nations over the past month. We encourage all parties to engage seriously in all efforts aimed at reaching a settlement in Yemen based on relevant Security Council resolutions and statements. These statements call for the return of the legitimate Government; the withdrawal of the Houthis from cities and the handing over of their heavy and medium-sized weapons; and ensuring the return of inclusive the political institutions.

Secondly, agreeing on a cessation of hostilities as part of the political settlement is of vital importance, given the continued suffering of Yemenis, regardless of their political affiliations, and the dire humanitarian needs and the need to ensure access to humanitarian assistance in all parts of Yemen. This is a priority for Egypt and the international community.

In conclusion, Egypt will continue to fully support the efforts of the United Nations and the Special Envoy to reach a settlement to the tragedy in Yemen.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I would like to thank the Secretary-General's Special Envoy, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed; the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Stephen O'Brien; and the World Food Programme Regional Director, Mr. Muhannad Hadi, for their briefings and for their work and for their support of Yemen and its people.

It is now more than a year and a half since the attempt by Houthi forces to seize control of the Government of Yemen prompted the collapse of the political transition and the outbreak of the current conflict. It is now clear that none of the parties can achieve their aims through military force.

Today's briefers have underlined just how bad the situation on the ground has become. Tragically — as we have been saying for too long — Yemeni civilians are paying a heavy price for the ongoing hostilities. More than 10,000 Yemenis have been killed, and most Yemenis are now in need of humanitarian assistance.

Images of the more 370,000 severely malnourished children remind us of the fragility of Yemen's food supply. Although the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen continues to play an essential role in managing food imports, a lack of port capacity means ships face long delays, further inflating the cost of food and fuel. This, compounded by the increasingly serious risk of economic collapse, threatens to put millions of Yemenis at risk of starvation.

The collapse of the public health system also means that millions of Yemenis lack access to even the most basic medical services. This medical crisis is compounded by the ban on commercial flights in and out of Sana'a, which prevents critically injured civilians from getting medical assistance elsewhere. We call for this ban to be lifted immediately.

Both sides have also regularly fallen short of their obligations to protect civilians caught up in this conflict. The coalition airstrike against a funeral in Sana'a on 8 October was a shocking example of this failure. It also makes the reports over the weekend of airstrikes against a Houthi-held prison all the more disturbing. Urgent steps are needed to provide accountability for these actions and to ensure that such incidents do not happen again. We stress once again the need for all parties fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

The conflict has created a conducive environment for terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant to expand their influence and reach. Recent attacks on shipping in the Bab-el-Mandeb have further demonstrated the emergence of other strategic threats from this conflict.

Ultimately it is only by ending hostilities that we can restore stability and end the suffering of the Yemeni people. This must be our central focus and most urgent priority. In this regard, we are deeply disappointed at the failure to extend the recent ceasefire brokered by the United Nations Special Envoy. An enduring ceasefire is a necessary step towards a more positive trajectory for Yemen. We urge all parties to agree to a sustained ceasefire as soon as possible.

For some time we have appeared frustratingly close to an agreement on how to end this conflict. The key elements of a deal have been evident for some months, with the main points of contention being their sequencing. The parties have been presented with a credible road map for security and political arrangements to end the conflict and resume an inclusive political transition. We recognize that this road map requires difficult concessions from all parties, but flat-out rejection is not acceptable.

The alternative is a further prolonging of the current bloody stalemate that can achieve little other than heaping further misery on the Yemeni people and creating longer-term problems for the country and region.We urge leaders on both sides to put the interests of their people first and accept this road map as the basis for ending this tragic conflict, and to take it forward in a spirit of flexibility and compromise. History will not judge kindly those who seek to delay or derail these efforts, and neither should the Council.

In the coming weeks, the Council needs to focus on doing all it can to support the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy and others to end the violence. It must also send a clear signal to the Yemeni parties that the international community expects them to resume meaningful negotiations with each other towards achieving a sustainable end to the conflict, and that that spoilers will not be tolerated.

We stand ready to work with Council members on anything that might be useful to add pressure on the parties to resolve this conflict.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your efforts and contributions in the presidency of the Council to promote the Council's work. I would also like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed; the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Stephen O'Brien; and the World Food Programme Regional Director, Mr. Muhannad Hadi, for their briefings.

At present, the situation in Yemen remains complicated. Peace talks are stagnant, conflicts are ongoing and the humanitarian situation is grave. China is concerned about the situation and empathizes with the suffering Yemeni people. Political dialogue is the only way to achieve lasting peace in Yemen. China therefore welcomes Special Envoy Ould Cheikh Ahmed's contact with the parties concerned and his active mediation.

In the current circumstances, China maintains that the parties to the conflict in Yemen and the international community should take the following actions expeditiously.

First, parties to the conflict should exercise restraint and cease hostilities as early as possible so as to create the necessary conditions for relaunching peace talks and improving the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

Secondly, it is imperative to further support Special Envoy Ould Cheikh Ahmed's mediation, so as to have a positive influence on the parties concerned, and to push for peace through negotiation.

Thirdly, parties to the peace talks should exercise sincerity and flexibility, narrow their differences through consultations, and properly address a series of sensitive issues, including withdrawal, disarmament and the establishment of a Government of national accord, so as to reach a comprehensive solution that fits the national condition in Yemen and addresses the concerns of all the parties.

Fourthly, parties to the conflict should take effective measures to alleviate the humanitarian situation. They should follow international humanitarian law and actively cooperate with international relief efforts. We hope that the international community will join hands in alleviating the suffering of the Yemeni people.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, whose valuable and continued efforts we welcome; Stephen O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs; and Muhannad Hadi, World Food Programme Regional Director, for their briefings and their commitment.

As we have just heard, the humanitarian situation in Yemen is extremely serious. There are several aspects that we find particularly troubling.

First is the attacks on the civilian population. France firmly condemned the attack on 8 October, where, according to the United Nations, there were 140 deaths and many wounded. We cannot stress enough how essential it is that all parties respect international humanitarian law.

The degradation of the health situation is very troubling. Yemen's health-care system is almost completely destroyed, and Yemenis no longer have access to basic health services. Today more than 19 million people — approximately 80 per cent of the population — have difficulty in accessing drinking water and basic sanitation. In these circumstances, the outbreak of cholera — with 6 deaths, 61 confirmed cases to date and more than a million potentially contaminated people — is particularly disturbing and shows the extent to which the situation has deteriorated.

The picture painted by the World Food Programme indicates that part of the population is on the brink of famine. There has been no significant improvement for months, especially in the regions most affected by the conflict, and today 14 million Yemenis — over half the population — live in conditions of food insecurity, with 7 million of them in a food emergency situation. Malnutrition rates have also reached alarming heights.

The survival of millions of Yemenis depends today on the immediate and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as on the re-establishment of services that are essential for survival. More than ever, the parties must ensure total, secure, permanent and unhindered humanitarian access, pursuant to their international obligations. In particular, the parties must facilitate and guarantee the work on the ground by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Given these tragic circumstances, the recent military developments are unacceptable, and it is with great concern that we have noted that the 72-hour

ceasefire last week was not only not fully observed, but it was also not renewed. Attacks on vessels in the Red Sea and against Saudi territory must cease. Moreover, it is essential to determine precisely which country is providing arms to the Houthis.

We once again call on parties to commit to and honour a new and immediate cessation of hostilities, which would provide a respite for the local population and enable a resumption of negotiations. As we have stated time and again, the only solution to the conflict is a political one. We deeply regret the rejection of the peace plan proposed by the Special Envoy. We are ready, in the Security Council, to determine how to pressure the parties to the Yemeni conflict to shoulder their responsibilities. The Yemeni population has been subjected to untold suffering. Each party must make the necessary concessions and put their individual interests aside. Each party must be able to commit to the road map for peace and its implementation.

The basic parameters of the settlement are known to one and all, as they were the result of in-depth consultations over several months in Kuwait, New York and, in recent days, in Riyadh and Sana'a. It is crucial that the international community, particularly regional Powers, support the process and not fuel the risk of escalation. We reiterate our full support for the tireless efforts of the Special Envoy and his road map — his commitment and determination to bring the parties to an agreement are remarkable and are to be encouraged.

The longer the conflict lasts, the more difficult it will be to deal with its long-term consequences. The more the humanitarian situation deteriorates, the greater the reconstruction needs will be. The longer the instability persists in the country — not allowing the legitimate Government to exercise the control that it should have — the greater the risk of terrorism, which threatens not only Yemen but, as we know, the entire world.

In conclusion, I would point out once again our support for the efforts of the Special Envoy, who spares no effort or time in securing the commitment of all parties in restoring peace and stability in Yemen. We fully trust him in reaching a definitive proposal that will lead to an agreement. In our national capacity, we are fully behind him and we will use every opportunity to engage in dialogue with our regional partners to advocate a cessation of hostilities and a peaceful settlement in Yemen. Let us together show that it is possible to have a unified Security Council in order to settle the crisis, under the aegis of the United Nations. It is our responsibility to do so, and if we pool our efforts we will have the means.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Cheikh Ahmed, Under-Secretary-General O'Brien and World Food Programme Regional Director Hadi for their briefings. I pay special thanks to Mr. Hadi for bearing witness on behalf of Yemenis whose voices, as we all know, are too rarely heard in this conflict.

Recently, a father of four children in Sana'a reportedly asked his daughters to post their feelings about this war on Facebook. Fifteen-year-old Kholud wrote:

> "We, the children of Yemen, want to achieve our hopes: to study and play and achieve our goals."

That is something one would expect almost any child of Kholud's age to want. But she went on to say that in this conflict:

> "We sleep afraid, we wake up afraid and leave our homes afraid."

Kholud's younger sister, 14-year-old Asma, wrote:

> "We are afraid of catastrophe, as it is painful when a person kills others; mothers, fathers and children."

And their youngest sister, 12-year-old Haneen, reported:

> "Every day, the noises get louder and louder next to us."

Although these voices are not with us enough, whether here in the Council or in our regional or international media, when we do hear from people on the ground, people like Kholud, Asma and Haneen, they are pretty consistent. They demand, or they plead, for an end to their suffering. We, as members of the Security Council, need to make the same demand, and we need to be united in doing so. The parties must stop escalating their attacks. They must, at long last, commit to peace, and we need immediate progress on three fronts: an immediate cessation of hostilities, a humanitarian surge — the likes of which we have not seen in Yemen for the life of the conflict — and a prompt return to political talks.

First, the United States calls on the parties to recommit immediately to the cessation of hostilities, which means halting all military actions on the ground,

in the air and at sea. That includes an end to shelling and an end to air strikes. A sustained cessation of hostilities is necessary to give the Special Envoy the space he needs to engage the parties on the terms of a political solution to the conflict.

There is very little good news in Yemen, but one small piece of good news is that we have seen that the parties can reduce the violence in Yemen when they show the will to do so. For all of the concerns that all of us have about command and control, from April to August this year, the cessation of hostilities led to a significant decrease in air strikes and violence, and therefore in suffering on the ground. I do not think we can overstate the success; the cessation was far from perfect, but it provided some respite for Yemen's civilians and it provided a backdrop to help encourage talks to continue. We need to get back to where we were with the cessation, and it needs to be improved.

But since the Kuwait talks ended nearly three months ago, the parties have intensified their attacks. Last Friday, forces loyal to the Houthi and former President Ali Abdullah Saleh reportedly launched a missile from Yemen towards Mecca and Jeddah, one among several recent missile launches. The United States condemns those missile launches in the strongest terms. Those attacks on Saudi territory are an obvious attempt to derail the political process, and they must cease. As we have emphasized, every country has a right to defend itself, and the United States remains fully committed to the security of Saudi Arabia.

It is also incumbent upon the Saudi-led coalition and the forces of the Yemeni Government to refrain from taking steps to escalate the violence and to commit to the cessation of hostilities. After 19 months of fighting, it should be clear that there is absolutely no military solution to the conflict. Those who believe that if one increases military pressure, it will strengthen one's hand in political negotiations, has 19 months of evidence not shown that it is not the case. Increasing military pressure and initiating new operations, at this point, is only going to prolong the unnecessary suffering. The longer the conflict continues, the more that Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula will use this vacuum to expand its presence and launch new attacks.

Air strikes that hit schools, hospitals and other civilian objects have to stop. In many cases, these strikes have damaged key infrastructure that is essential to delivering humanitarian aid in Yemen. The United States strongly condemns the air strike on mourners at a reception hall in Sana'a earlier this month. The strike left 140 mourners dead and more than 600 injured. The coalition has accepted responsibility, and we look forward to further reporting on their investigation of the attack, including on concrete measures taken to establish accountability, compensate victims and make certain that such strikes are not repeated. The United States will continue to underscore to the coalition, the need to take all feasible measures to reduce civilian casualties and target precisely, including verifying targets against a no-strike list.

We also strongly condemn Houthi-Saleh forces for all the cross-border attacks into Saudi Arabia and the shelling of populated areas, especially in Taiz. On 4 October, the United Nations reported that artillery fire in the centre of Taiz killed at least 10 civilians, including 6 children, and injured 17 others. The civilian death toll underscores again that the parties need to commit to the cessation of hostilities.

That brings me to my second point, which is the need for a humanitarian surge of a different order. The statistics that Under-Secretary-General O'Brien and Mr. Hadi have presented show that the problem is getting worse. Let us take only one as an example. The number of 370,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition has increased from that of 320,000 reported last year. Severe acute malnutrition means one thing — unless these kids get an immediate course of medical treatment, they will likely die. Let us consider that for a moment. Hundreds of thousands of children — infants and babies in many cases — are on the brink of dying not because of bombs or shells, but just because they cannot get a simple course of nutritional supplements. Millions more are at risk.

Let us therefore focus on how we can respond. All Member States should demand here at the United Nations and in our bilateral relationships and conversations that the parties allow complete and unfettered humanitarian access. That means that authorities on the ground need to approve the United Nations plans to distribute aid and let convoys through checkpoints. It also means that roads, bridges and ports that are vital for delivering aid need to be protected from the fighting. The United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) has helped facilitate imports of basic food and medicine into Yemen, and, as Mr. O'Brien has noted, it deserves all of our continued support and full cooperation from the parties.

But there are some additional steps that should be taken. The parties need to reopen the airport in Sana'a to civilian flights once again, allowing critically injured Yemenis to leave and Yemenis, who are stranded abroad and wish to return, to get back to their homes. When fuel and medicine do enter Yemen, the parties need to allow such goods to reach hospitals in all parts of the country. The cranes at Al-Hudaydah port need to be repaired and the parties should facilitate the United Nations plans to repair them so as to restore capacity at what had long been a vital port and source of influx of many goods.

At the same time, one has to stress that no amount of aid can make up for the void left by Yemen's collapsed economy. That is why we are concerned about the consequences of the Yemeni Government's decision to move the central bank. We call on the Government to continue paying salaries nationwide. Those salaries are one of the few sources of income left for many Yemeni families. I was struck by Mr. Hadi's account that often just a small amount of money is what is needed for a mother to be able move from one part of the country to a place where a nutritional supplement is available. When salaries are taken away, a critical sources of income is taken away, and it becomes more likely that infants and children will die of starvation.

My third and final point is on the urgent need for a political solution. The Special Envoy has presented both parties with a credible and balanced road map for ending the conflict together with the security plan for Sana'a. The road map addresses the concerns of the Yemeni Government about sequenced withdrawals from the key cities of Sana'a, Taiz and Al-Hudaydah, and it addresses the concerns of the Houthi and the General People's Congress about the transition of executive authority. The road map is a basis for a negotiation. It is not a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. Now is not the time for any of the parties to hedge, stall or add new conditions. The parties should engage with the Special Envoy immediately to hammer out the details of a final agreement. Of course, moving forward with this road map will require the parties in Yemen to compromise, which is not a strong suit. It is long past time for them to do so. The people of Yemen cannot afford for the parties to continue acting on the illusion that they will achieve a total victory. It will not happen.

Let me conclude. Earlier, I mentioned the problem of severe acute malnutrition, joining many voices around this table. A recent BBC documentary entitled *Starving Yemen* profiled one such case, that of a toddler named Abdul Rachman who was born at the start of the conflict. Abdul Rachman is an 18-month-old infant now but weighs as much as a six-month-old baby. He is also lactose intolerant, requiring a baby formula that used to be widely available before the conflict, but now his family cannot find the specific formula anywhere. Looking at Abdul Rachman, his mother finally breaks down in the documentary. She says, "I am losing my son, and there is nothing that I can do about it. I have seen children like him on television. They die".

At the eleventh hour, an especially determined doctor just barely managed to find a three-month supply of formula to keep Abdul Rachman alive. But let us consider again that there are more than 370,000 kids suffering severe acute malnutrition like Abdul Rachman, with just as many anguished mothers at their bedsides who have seen kids like these on television but never imagined that they would be holding one like them. The Special Envoy is offering a way out of the fighting. The plight of children like Abdul Rachman should compel the parties to negotiate and cease hostilities immediately. And we, as members of the Council, should unite in demanding it.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Senegal thanks you, Sir, for convening this meeting. My delegation would like to thank Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Muhannad Hadi for their briefings and poignant descriptions that they have provided us with regard to the situation in Yemen. Their combined work on the ground allows us to entertain the hope of the cessation of hostilities, better access to humanitarian aid and a final political solution.

Senegal regrets the deteriorating situation in the country and the innumerable lives lost, including those who died during a funeral procession, which was targeted on 8 October. We must remind all the parties to the conflict, including the Houthis and their allies, their obligation to protect civilians in accordance with international human rights laws. Unconditional and uninterrupted access to humanitarian aid must be provided to all those in need of it. Once again, we would like to recall that the challenge to the legitimacy of the Yemeni Government is at the basis of the crisis. The conflict has overflowed in the form of missile attacks on Saudi Arabia in Jeddah and the holy site of Mecca. Senegal vigorously condemns those missile launchings and agrees with Egypt that that is a red line, which must not be crossed.

The political solution remains possible on the basis of negotiations between the parties, taking into account the initiative proposed by the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as its implementation mechanism, and in line with Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

My delegation would like to condemn the presence of Da'esh and Al-Qaida in Yemen. We know that terrorist groups are the only ones that profit from the instability of countries in crisis, exacerbating the threat of terrorism throughout the world. My Government therefore calls on the parties to the conflict, particularly the Houthis and their allies, to quickly resume in good faith negotiations and show a realistic attitude and mutual trust-building, so as to foster the necessary conditions to end the crisis which has disastrous humanitarian and security implications.

Senegal urgently calls on the international community to support the humanitarian action plan crafted for Yemen aimed at providing humanitarian assistance, which is vital for millions of individuals. In the same vein, Senegal encourages the continued efforts of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism, taking into account the importance of resuming port and airport activities so that highly needed aid, including fuel, gets to Yemen.

In his briefing, Mr. O'Brien stated that there can be no humanitarian solution to the crisis in Yemen. The only solution is political. Senegal, together with the other members of the Security Council, reiterates its support for the Special Envoy's efforts to find a swift political solution to the crisis.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): At the outset, I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, and the Russian delegation on your successful steering of the work of the Security Council during the month of October. We are grateful to Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Under-Secretary-General Stephen O'Brien and the Regional Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. Hadi, for their briefings and for their commitment to Yemen and its people.

Regarding the political process, we praise Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmedfor doing his utmost by working with all parties to the conflict in order to spell out the technical details of a peace agreement and find a political solution to the devastating conflict. The latest proposal of a road map for a cessation of hostilities and the resumption of political dialogue on the country's future is a viable path for the solution to the Yemeni crisis that we would like to see embraced by the warring parties. We call on the Houthis and Saleh's followers to stop their deadly military offensives, and encourage them to accept the proposals of withdrawing their military forces from the capital. We further encourage President Hadi to foster a sense of flexibility and a spirit of compromise.

However, it is most regrettable that President Mansour Hadi and the Houthis have rejected the road map proposal on the grounds that it is not a balanced solution. President Hadi and the Houthis should be open to compromise, taking into account the devastating impact of the conflict on the Yemeni people and its dangerous repercussions on the region as a whole, with the terrorists of Al-Qaida exploiting the situation to advance their sinister agenda. Maintaining an inflexible stance and preconditions is not the best course of action to engage in meaningful negotiations towards a cessation of hostilities.

Enough is enough. We strongly condemn the proxy war being waged against the Yemeni people by regional and other Powers and by the Yemeni parties to the conflict themselves. Sadly, some countries that boast of being the top providers of humanitarian aid to victims of conflict are also the main suppliers of weapons and training to those who indiscriminately bomb civilians and prolong the war just for the sake of promoting dubious strategic objectives, in absolute denial of the basic interests of the Yemeni people.

We are all well aware of the devastating impact the fighting has had on the civilian population in Yemen, as well as on the country's economy. Civilians, including children, continue to suffer the heaviest burden of the conflict, with vital infrastructure, such as schools and hospitals, being bombed and destroyed. The briefings of Under-Secretary-General O'Brien and Regional Director Hadi portrayed a situation that is completely unsustainable and a catastrophe of incalculable dimensions.

We take this opportunity to call once again on all the parties of the Yemeni conflict to work towards a permanent cessation of hostilities and refrain from air strikes, ground fighting and shelling, especially in populated areas. It is imperative that the parties constructively engage with the Special Envoy in order to overcome the lack of mutual trust. The only solution is a political compromise and putting an end to external meddling in the conflict.

In order to avoid the deepening humanitarian and economic catastrophe that would in turn fuel the criminal and terrorist networks in the country and throughout the region, all political stakeholders, as well as the international community and the Security Council in particular, are called on to uphold their responsibilities by redoubling their efforts in support of the Special Envoy's mediation to foster confidence-building measures for a more favourable negotiated environment.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, I congratulate the Russian Federation on the way in which it has led the deliberations of the Security Council this month.

After having carefully listened to our excellent briefers today, I will pick up on the eloquent comment made by the Ambassador of Angola: "Enough is enough." That was very eloquent. The conclusion I have drawn from the briefers today is that Yemen is facing a threefold collapse on the humanitarian, political and economic and financial fronts.

As far as the humanitarian collapse is concerned, today we have heard a whole slue of figures. I first would like to pay tribute to the 10,000 victims and then I would to like to particularly focus on the plight of the 10 million children suffering from malnutrition and at risk of losing an entire generation. That goes hand in hand with the enormous difficulties we are experiencing in our efforts to provide humanitarian aid to Yemen. I believe that Samantha Power has urged us all to do our part to facilitate access to humanitarian aid in Yemen. We stand committed to her appeal and join her in calling on all parties. We also have a humanitarian plan that, regrettably, has been financed only to 26 per cent so far.

The second crisis that is upon Yemen is a political collapse. It is political because, on the one hand, the road map, which in our view is a reasonable and balanced, has been rejected; and on the other, because we are seeing indiscriminate attacks on the civilian population. To that end, I align myself with the eloquent statement made by the Ambassador of Uruguay. As far as the road map is concerned, Mr. Ould Sheikh Ahmed can rest assured that he has our full support. I know that he will be returning shortly with a view to crafting an agreement around the road map, and in those efforts he will have the full backing of the Spanish delegation. Regarding the indiscriminate attacks against the civilian population, we of course uphold the idea that said crimes cannot go unpunished.

The third collapse in Yemen is economic and financial. Before arriving to today's meeting, I had intended to ask our briefers about the situation of the Central Bank reserves. Well, we have such excellent briefers that the economic and financial situation in Yemen could not be clearer. The situation is critical; they are going to have to stop paying salaries, which will further exacerbate the political and humanitarian collapse. What will happen if salaries go unpaid? The result will be bleak for future of Yemen. It will mean that administration and all institutions will collapse and the process of reconstruction will become extremely difficult — almost impossible. Economic support for Yemen in the current circumstances is therefore absolutely essential.

What is the message that I would like to convey to my fellow members of the Council? It is very simple. I listened very carefully to the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, who very clearly outlined the elements of a draft resolution that I believe will bring change to the situation in Yemen. The elements of said draft resolution are, first, an immediate cessation of hostilities; it is quite clear that there can be no military solution to the crisis in Yemen. The resumption of negotiations is the second element — I again reiterate my support our Special Envoy — followed, thirdly, by accountability for the violations of international humanitarian law, and fourthly, unhindered access to humanitarian aid.

I would like to conclude by striking a positive note, echoing what the French Ambassador had to say so clearly, which is that consensus in Yemen is possible. We trust that that is the case. Let us rally around the United Kingdom's draft resolution to truly bring about a change to this currently desperate situation.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): My delegation is very grateful to Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien and Mr. Muhannad Hadi of the World Food Programme for their briefings.

Malaysia is gravely concerned about the very bleak picture of the situation on the ground, with the escalation in violence, the attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, the threat of famine, the collapse of the health system and the threat of a cholera outbreak. Regrettaby, unlike other crises in the region,

the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has remained largely under the radar. Last week, a side event on Yemen was held at the United Nations where we were shown a documentary by the BBC on the threat of famine in the country. While the international community's attention is focused on deaths due to ongoing fighting, we have largely overlooked the slow but widespread deaths brought about by starvation and lack of medical treatment. Mothers have had to watch their children and babies wither away before their very eyes due to the lack of milk, food and medicine. Even bringing their children to the hospital did little to improve their situation due to the collapse of the country's health system and the dire lack of food, fuel and medicine. That situation is simply unacceptable.

As we have heard today, a staggering 14 million people in Yemen are suffering from hunger and malnutrition, over 3 million have been driven from their homes and 21 million people are in need of humanitarian aid. We call on all parties to agree to a lasting and permanent ceasefire that would facilitate the flow of desperately needed food, fuel and medical supplies into the country. We also urge the parties to open up Yemeni air space to commercial aircraft and to evacuate those in need of urgent medical treatment. We join others in condemning all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure in Yemen, including the recent attacks on the marketplace, a water well and a funeral ceremony. We also condemn attacks on Saudi territory by the Houthi militias, particularly the recent targeting of the Holy City of Makka Al-Mukarama.

We support calls by the Secretary-General for full and independent inquiries to investigate gross violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law so as to ensure justice and accountability.

The continuing conflict has also led to a marked increase in the number of children being recruited by parties to the conflict. About 2 million children are currently out of school due to the ongoing fighting and insecurity and are being deprived of their right to education. That situation has been exploited by our militias that are actively going to villages to recruit children. Some have estimated that up to one third of fighters in armed groups are children. Many of them are guarding checkpoints, but they are also on the front line fighting. Malaysia urges all parties to the conflict to adhere to their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. All parties must make every effort to protect children, civilians and civilian objects, including in ensuring immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access.

With the breakdown in the talks in Kuwait, the conflicting parties in Yemen seem further and further away from the promising steps they had taken towards peace several months ago. The recent cessation of hostilities, as we have seen, is far from sufficient to address the humanitarian disaster in Yemen. We fully concur with the assessment by Under-Secretary-General O'Brien that the best humanitarian relief is to end the conflict. Malaysia echoes the view held by the international community that there is no military solution to the conflict. However, the conflicting parties themselves need to believe in the need for a political solution. Prolonging the violence will not benefit either side. Terrorist groups will only exploit the violence, which will lead to a further catastrophic humanitarian situation.

A peaceful resolution of the conflict in Yemen hinges on the political will of the conflicting parties themselves, but the Security Council has an important role to play in bringing about the desired outcome by exerting its authority and its influence on the relevant parties and by utilizing the various tools at its disposal. The Council must send a clear signal to the conflicting parties on the need to cease fighting and to return to the negotiating table in order to protect civilians and civilian objects, to ensure immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access and to adhere to their obligations under international law. We need to continue to support the tireless efforts of Special Envoy Ahmed to secure peace in Yemen. We urge all parties to engage constructively in negotiating the road map proposed by Mr. Ahmed, with the aim of ending the conflict and reaching a political agreement for the sake of peace and stability in Yemen and the region.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I also thank the Special Envoy for Yemen and the other briefers for their updates.

Needless to say, the briefers draw a grim picture of the significant deteriorating of the humanitarian situation in Yemen, which is a cause of grave concern for all of us. The ongoing conflict has only aggravated the already existing problems in that country. There have been more than 6,800 dead and 33,800 injured only since March 2015, according to the World Health Organization. Access to Taiz, with a population of 200,000 people, continues to be limited. Nine of the

22 governorates remain at the emergency levels for food security, if not yet facing famine. Those are just a few indicators, but they are a timely reminder of the grim reality in Yemen and require our united and urgent reaction to stop what Under-Secretary-General O'Brien describes as a "man-made brutal humanitarian disaster"and to prevent the country from total collapse, as many have said already.

On a separate note, we view as equally worrying the upsurge in rocket attacks launched by the Houthi forces in Yemen against targets located in Saudi Arabia, as well as maritime targets, including United Arab Emirates vessels and United States ships. Keeping the important shipping passage of Bab Al-Mandeb safe and secure is of paramount importance for international and regional peace and stability. We also call on all sides to prevent any attacks against innocent targets. Immediate steps are needed to prevent further internationalization of the conflict.

Against that backdrop, we fully support the United Nations Special Envoy and hope that his relentless efforts will bear fruit in the form of a negotiated settlement. In that regard, the latest United Nations peace plan for Yemen deserves careful consideration. The key elements of the plan — a negotiated withdrawal from Sana'a and the handing over of heavy and medium weapons, including ballistic missiles, along with the formation of a national unity Government — appear to open a path to hard, but necessary, decisions that may lead to a durable settlement. If fulfilled, that peace initiative can become a solid foundation for the continuation of the national political dialogue, on an inclusive and non-sectarian basis, thus contributing to the full implementation of resolution 2216 (2015) and the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative.

In conclusion, the Council should do everything possible to reverse the trend that makes Yemenis, as Mr. Hadi rightly described to us, "feel forgotten by the entire world". In order to achieve that, we call on all sides of the conflict to return to negotiations immediately. As in Syria, there is no military solution to the crisis in Yemen.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would like to express its gratitude for the briefings delivered by Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien and Regional Director for the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe of the World Food Programme Muhannad Hadi. We thank the briefers for their testimonies.

Venezuela appreciates the commendable endeavours and facilitation efforts carried out by Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed to try and seek a political solution to the current armed conflict that has rocked Yemen for almost two years. We reiterate to him our full support for his work on the ground. Venezuela believes that negotiations will produce positive results only insofar as the parties show flexibility and commitment to achieving lasting and sustainable peace in Yemen.

Yemen is one of those cases at the Security Council that falls into the category of so-called 'silenced conflicts'. The Yemeni people are the victims of a brutal violence that is the result of intense armed conflict, in which schools, hospitals and housing are targets of indiscriminate bombing with highly advanced and expensive armaments known for their precision when aimed at any given target. We do not believe that errors are possible in that type of military attack. What does seem possible is a deliberate attempt used to punish the Yemeni civilian population — against whom even cluster munitions have been used, in clear violation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

In that regard, as has been pointed out by other speakers, our country resolutely condemns the aerial attacks carried out by the coalition on a funeral procession in Sana'a on 8 October, in which 140 people were killed and 525 civilians were injured. We also condemn the bombing of hospitals run by Médecins sans Frontières, as well as the bombing of civilian sanitation centres and services. We believe that such illegal actions cannot go unpunished, for which it is essential that there be investigations into the violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that have been committed during the conflict.

On that point our country would like to make it very clear that we categorically reject any attack on the civilian population, wherever such attacks may take place — whether in Syria, Yemen, Iraq or Palestine. The Security Council seems to remain passive when faced with such an awful reality; it has given little or no visibility to such a critical issue. We must remember that, months ago, Under-Secretary-General O'Brien

described the humanitarian situation in Yemen as being proportionately worse than that in Syria. There seems to be a brutal competition taking place in terms of the playing out of a culture of death, war and violence in the region.

The exchange of opinions we are engaged in today at this briefing meeting is a rare occurrence, as there are very few opportunities in which the Security Council discusses this issue in open format. We would therefore like to thank the President for having facilitated today's dialogue and for making it possible for us show this problem to the rest of the United Nations membership. We hope that the same will hold true with regard to other issues that are confined to closed consultations. For the sake of transparency, open meetings should be the rule, not the exception — something that is one of the shortcomings in the working methods of the Security Council.

Since Venezuela became a member of the Security Council — and just a couple of months from ending our term in this organ — we have seen with great regret how the political and humanitarian situation in Yemen has worsened as a result of the armed conflict. It is probably high time to review resolution 2216 (2015) and adapt it to the situation on the ground. In that respect, we support the road map that has been proposed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, which seeks to de-escalate and halt the conflict. Furthermore, the Security Council should as soon as possible adopt a draft resolution on the humanitarian situation that includes the establishment of humanitarian pauses and the cessation of all armed attacks, including aerial bombing. In line with its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security, the Council cannot continue to remain indifferent in the face of the gravity of the events taking place in Yemen every day, and must stop seeing them as routine occurrences: business-as-usual. It is fundamental to achieve a sustained cessation of hostilities in order to provide an opportunity for humanitarian agencies on the ground to do their work. Any solution to the conflict must include, as a basic principle, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yemen.

Moreover, such a solution must also proscribe and condemn attacks against the territory of Saudi Arabia as well as on maritime traffic in the Red Sea. Our country express its absolute rejection of attacks against the territory of Saudi Arabia and against navigation in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait.

The Council must move forward constructively in addressing the political and humanitarian crisis affecting the brotherly people of Yemen. Members of the Security Council must address the subject objectively, with determination and commitment, putting aside national expediency and the positions of its members. We are concerned that the geopolitical agendas of certain regional actors, and some outside the region — some of them Council members — are hampering any possibility of reaching an agreement that would put an end to the current armed clashes, and are undermining diplomatic efforts led by the Special Envoy.

Although the people of Yemen are the main losers in this war, countries that manufacture and export weapons have profited outrageously by providing highly sophisticated weapons to one of the parties, in amounts that total billions of dollars. It is therefore paradoxical that countries that emphatically promoted the Arms Trade Treaty are now the ones that are stoking the armed conflict by providing sophisticated weapons for financial gain, which are then used by one the parties to intentionally violate the population's rights and international human rights law.

Venezuela reiterates that the solution to the armed conflict in Yemen lies with its citizens — its people — along with the support of the international community, as they exercise their right to self-determination. Our country will support all peaceful political attempts aimed at safeguarding the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of this brotherly nation, pursuant to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Armed clashes have plunged the country into a very grave and deplorable humanitarian crisis, as has been pointed out by all the relevant agencies of the United Nations — and revealed today in stark relief. This devastating scenario serves to highlight the urgent need to urgently respond to a problem that is having a negative impact on the humanitarian situation when it comes to providing food, medicine, water, nutrition supplements for children, psychosocial services and other basic services. We therefore call upon the parties to allow humanitarian agencies and other organizations to reach the entire population in order to allow the delivery of assistance, so as to address the most pressing needs of the Yemeni population.

It is vital to reach a political solution to the conflict as soon as possible. The institutional collapse and the current sectarian rhetoric in Yemen have benefited Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in furthering their terrorist activities, which are a threat to regional and international peace and security. We are concerned by the fact that fighters from both terrorist organizations are prepared to cooperate tactically to achieve their destabilizing aims in Yemen and the rest of the region.

Once again, we encourage the parties to make a decisive commitment to inclusive dialogue, with a view to achieving a settlement that puts an end to the hostilities and thereby achieves a solid, lasting peace in Yemen. We believe it particularly important that there be an atmosphere of mutual confidence and that confidence between the parties be re-established, in a way that tensions can be decreased and that negotiations can take place successfully. Countries with any influence on the parties must continue to work to make progress in this process.

The tragic situation and prolonged crisis in Yemen require that we not relent in our efforts to help the parties turn the tide on the atmosphere of violence that prevails in this Arab nation. We trust that the stakeholders will once again assume their commitments to find political solutions that put an end to the war and allow the people of Yemen to regain hope for peace. Our brothers and sisters in Yemen deserve to live in peace. Public discussion of these matters in the Security Council will serve to ensure that all parties are aware of the need to find a political solution together.

In conclusion, our delegation would like to acknowledge once again the efforts made by all volunteers and humanitarian personnel on the ground in Yemen who are making a contribution to helping the Yemeni people. We also appreciate the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and of its staff deployed on the ground, who are involved in the noble task of supporting the affected population under very adverse circumstances. Venezuela would like to reiterate its support for the initiative and political efforts championed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We would like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed; the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. O'Brien; and the Regional Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. Hadi, for their briefings.

We are surprised that what is taking place in Yemen has not resulted in a frenzy in the mass media, or indeed in the Security Council. Oddly, it is not being covered at the same level as the Syrian problem. We must stress that the scale of the humanitarian situation in that country on a number of parameters is even worse than that in Syria and can only be qualified as catastrophic. Fully four fifths of the 26 million people in Yemen require urgent humanitarian assistance. The country has more than 3 million internally displaced people. Approximately 14 million people are experiencing food shortages, and the infrastructure essential for daily life — medical, educational and other needs — are in ruins. Under the pretext of preventing violations of an arms embargo, there has been a ground, air and sea blockade of Yemen, which impacts first and foremost the peaceful population. There is now an acute lack of food, medicine and other basic necessities.

We would not want to exploit the issue of civilian losses, including from air strikes; however, it is impossible not to mention the cynical double standards that we are encountering. It is known, for example, that the United Kingdom has been one of the major suppliers of various kinds of weaponry in the region, which are then used against the Yemenis. Since March 2015, according *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, London has sold more than £3 billion, or $5 billion, in weapons into the region. That is not a small amount of money to be made from war. Those weapons also result in the loss of civilian lives.

The question then arises: How can a country with a clear material interest in extending the military conflict be a penholder for the Yemen file in the Security Council? Let us take the most recent draft press statement prepared by the so-called penholder. It was not simply broadly general, but it was openly weak in its discussion of an air strike, which, according to the information cited, was made against a funeral procession in Sana'a on 8 October. It was not stated who made the strike, even though the coalition has already accepted the responsibility. There was not a call for an investigation to punish those responsible. We were not in a position to support that draft, considering that,

given the atrocities committed, the toothless text would have been an insult for the Yemenis.

After that, the delegation of the United Kingdom announced they were preparing a draft resolution on Yemen, which has not yet seen the light of day. It would be interesting to know whether such a draft resolution will contain a provision establishing a no-fly zone over Sana'a, which, even before the tragedy at the funeral, was subjected to random strikes on more than one occasion. I think the time has come to review the penholdership on Yemen. We have new members preparing to become members of the Council in 2017, and we think that they could take upon themselves the responsible and objective penholding of the Yemen file in the Security Council.

Let me return to the situation in the country. Despite the ceasefire announced by the Special Envoy, it is being violated on both sides. The first violations came just several hours after the statement made by Ismail Ahmed. We hope to see the road map on settling the Yemen crisis prepared by the Special Envoy. We have heard a lot about that, but given that we understand that it does not exist on paper, it is not yet possible to evaluate it adequately. We think that it should concern moving simultaneously on political and military tracks, including a Government of national unity with the Houthis. What is important is to ensure that the parties return to the negotiating table to discuss the details. That is because the devil is in the details. That is, if both countries agree on the principles of an approach — although now there is information that one of the parties, namely, President Hadi Mansour, has already rejected the plan — then we will have a number of accompanying issues that will need to be worked through and agreed upon.

In particular, the road map, as far as we understand, does not talk about the withdrawal of coalition troops from Yemen or stopping air strikes against the territory of the country. Without that assurance, implementing any kind of agreement would be more than problematic. In turn, we would like to say that we support any and all agreements that are consensual in nature and with which all political forces in Yemen can agree. We will work actively with all parties to the conflict. The main goal is to ensure that there is a sustainable ceasefire. That is a must, both from the humanitarian and the anti-terrorist viewpoints, as well as to strengthen the parties' confidence in order to ensure that there can be a comprehensive agreement on how to settle the conflict.

Unfortunately, the clear winner in the Yemeni conflict is still the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and other terrorist and extremist groups that control whole regions in the south and east of the country. From experience in Syria, we know that we need to combat the fighters now, without putting it off for later. The earlier all political forces in Yemen pool their efforts to counter the threat of terrorists, the fewer the chances for radical Islamists to keep their positions.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express thanks to you, Mr. President, Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the friendly Russian Federation, for your wise leadership during the deliberations of the Security Council for the month of October and for granting us this opportunity to address the Council. I would also like to express thanks to His Excellency the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, for their great efforts to reach a peace agreement to end the coup against the Yemeni State and the tragedy of war launched by the Houthi militias and the pro-Saleh forces against our people since September 2014. We also wish to thank Mr. O'Brien, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. Hadi of the World Food Programme (WFP) for their briefings. We also thank all members of the Security Council for their statements, all of which reflect great concern with regard to the tragic conditions in my country, Yemen.

Today, after two years of the coup in Yemen, the scene is depressing and dark. The Houthi militias, allied with the former President, have tampered with the fate of the Yemeni nation, looted our scare resources and paved the way for hunger, diseases and epidemics that devastate the people. They are telling all Yemenis either to accept the coup, the prevalence of sectarian politics and the Iranian plot in Sana'a, which creates permanent tension in the area, or to face death and destruction. The Under-Secretary-General and the representative of the WFP have presented a glimpse into the dire humanitarian situation my country has reached.

In areas under the control by those masterminding the coup, who are not Yemenis, access of humanitarian aid to the besieged city of Taiz has been impeded and

access to the United Nations mission in the city has also been denied. This Organization failed to condemn that fact during the cessation of hostilities. Since the end of the talks in Kuwait, the coup party has refused to interact positively in the framework of the proposed peace process based on the three terms of reference. They have continued waging war and exploited the cessation of hostilities to smuggle mid-range missiles with a range of more than 600 kilometres, such as those that targeted the holy sites in Saudi Arabia that are sacred to all Muslims throughout the world.

Iranian-made Noor and Kosar missiles — naval missiles that have been modified to launch from land to attack sea vessels — have targeted international waterways in the southern part of the Red Sea. Reports of the Panel of Experts on Yemen and the American Fleet in the region have confirmed the scope of the shipments from Iran to the coup masters in Yemen. The Security Council has failed to issue a single statement condemning that terrorism-sponsoring State, despite several communications transmitted by Member States to the Secretary-General and the Security Council.

The choice of peace was, and remains, the choice of the Yemeni Government. It is our unwavering position, and the only alternative to end the suffering of our patient and strong Yemeni people, who have been continued to pay the price of an unjust war waged everywhere in Yemen by the militias of the Houthi and Ali Abdullah Saleh. We in the Government believe that peace is the only way to eradicate the criminal gangsters and warlords and to liberate the people from those murderers who, devoid of conscience, have destroyed our resources and valuable infrastructure and threaten our daily life.

For the past two years, the Yemeni Government has demonstrated its positive and responsible position and participated interactively in initiatives of the international community. We have continuously proposed painful concessions for the sake of peace in Yemen, while the coup masters continue to refuse a peaceful settlement and persist in carrying out militia activity. As a result some may have thought that we might propose measures to undermine sovereignty and the restoration of the State, resorting to security arrangements without guarantees or an understanding of the social, geographical and political background of the conflict in Yemen.

While we emphasize the importance of the three terms of reference for peace in Yemen, the coup side has insisted on evading those solutions and continuing unilateral actions that have been rejected by the international community, such as establishment of a political entity to administer the State and appointing a coup-based Government. When the consultations in Kuwait ended, owing to the refusal of the other side to interact with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, international efforts continued, leading to ministerial meetings of the four in Jeddah, New York and London. We in the Government welcomed the new efforts supplementing the United Nations efforts. We emphasize that any attempt to evade the three terms of reference for peace, as represented by the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its implementing mechanism, and the National Dialogue Conference outcomes and Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015), all serve to stoke actions by the coup, and thus the violence in Yemen. Any proposal that is not aimed at ending the coup and its withdrawal from all of the cities and the State institutions and the handing over of weapons and missiles and release of the prisoners, all of that would be taking the side of the militias and accepting the logic of terrorism and its control over the fate of nations.

Sustained peace cannot be achieved by rewarding the coup masters for their coup and handing them authority on a golden plate. It cannot be achieved by keeping most of the weapons in the hands of the militias, while they continue to occupy villages and governorates and cities under the pretense of a gradual solution, while demanding an end to legitimacy. Peace will not be achieved by ignoring the recognized terms of reference and ignoring the sacrifices of the Yemeni people or their victories. Peace will not be achieved without removing all those that have impeded the peaceful transfer of power in Yemen, sabotaged the transitional period, rejected the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference outcomes and waged war and destruction and threatened international peace and security and navigational activities in international waterways. Peace will not be achieved without removing every person so involved, including former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, his son Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh and Abdulmalik al-Houthi and their brothers and assistants.

All parties in Yemen, including political parties, military leaders, security leaders and elected leaders of

local governate councils and youth groups and women's organizations, have issued statements in the past few days condemning any deviation from the path of peace and any attempt to thwart efforts to stop the conflict in Yemen. They have expressed support for His Excellency the President to prioritize the negotiations so that we can bury the coup and ensure victory to democracy and the Republic of Yemen.

Today Yemen's sovereignty is represented by the presidency. It cannot be compromised, as it is the sole guarantor of the completion of the political transition in Yemen. To complete the new federal constitution, we have warned many times, as Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed well knows, that further pressure against the legitimate Government will lead to strengthening of the coup's forces and will not allow the international community to contribute to rebuilding the Yemeni State. On the contrary, that will fuel the coup forces and the idea that the international community is closer to understanding the Iranian expansion plan in Yemen.

We have affirmed several times in this Chamber that the war in my country, Yemen, can end today. As I stated, that is based on the power of the Yemeni people and their rejection of the death banner raised by the militias, through raising their voices as one in rejecting and demanding an end to the coup and this unjust war against our great Yemeni people.

I therefore call upon the Yemeni people to reject the devilish criminal militias that have transformed life in our nation into a real nightmare, so that we can implement together, once again, the outcomes of the National Dialogue that we formulated with our dreams and aspirations in order to catch up with the rest of humankind and build a federal, democratic, peaceful Yemen.

In conclusion, Yemen highly appreciates the efforts of His Excellency the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, as well as those on the part of the Security Council and the Ambassadors of the Group of 18 for peace and stability in Yemen. We also renew our thanks and gratitude to our brethren in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt and the remaining States Organizationf the Arab Coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen. We call upon all members of the Security Council to continue making the unified efforts that have accompanied the crisis in Yemen since it began in 2011. Because of the Council's unified position, a great deal has been achieved in Yemen in partnership with the Yemeni Government. This can be added to the impeccable record of the United Nations in conflict resolution in the world.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I would ask speakers to be very, very brief, as we have one more meeting scheduled.

I give the floor to Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien: Extremely briefly, I just wanted to reiterate that the best humanitarian response is to find a way forward to peace, and I would certainly urge all to get behind the plan put forward by the Special Envoy.

I just want to give total assurance to the representative of the United States that if we have access, then we can certainly make sure that we go through an extraordinary level of surge in order to meet the needs, providing we are given the resources to do so; I am confident that we will be given the chance. I call on all parties to respect all provisions for the protection of civilians, and at the same time I wish to add my voice to those that have lauded the incredible bravery of the aid workers who are getting significant amounts of aid through, even in these very challenging times of an absolutely vast humanitarian requirement of 21.2 million people in need.

As was reiterated by the President himself, this is a catastrophe, and that is why I am calling for us to take immediate steps to do what we can to get to grips with it.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. O'Brien for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Hadi.

Mr. Hadi: First, I should like to thank the United States for having invited me today. I think that this very much helped me to fulfil the promise that I made to the people that I would convey their suffering to the Council.

Secondly, I wish to thank the Member States for listening to me. As a matter of fact, this is the first time that I feel that I am working as an ambassador, but this time an ambassador for the women and the children, an ambassador for the voiceless and an ambassador for the people in Yemen, who do not have the opportunity to come here and express what they are going through. When I was speaking, the images of the people that I met came into my mind, and I am glad that I am able to convey part of what I saw to the Council.

Last but not least, I wish to leave the Council with one thought: saving lives in Yemen is doable. It is not mission impossible. It can be done, and we have done it in many places in the world. What we want is the support of the Council. We want the support of all Member States. We want the support of the international community. There is no reason to lose even one life in Yemen, so I would repeat once again that saving lives is not mission impossible. We will do it.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Hadi for his statement.

I believe that today's meeting was very useful and enabled us to once again better understand how tragic and complicated the situation in Yemen is and the complicated nature of the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. I would therefore like to conclude this meeting by expressing strong support for his efforts, which we all hope will lead to peace in Yemen as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.